LUCY LOVELOCK
a girl in a whirl

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Lucy Lovelock
first book: a girl in a whirl
second book: Mirror the world

a cosmos original
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So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day. (2 Kings 17:41)

To men and women, everywhere, who want to be free

1

It all seemed so quiet and peaceful in Great Britain after the Race Wars, and the Great Economic Famine. Why the aforementioned had happened no one was sure, but everyone who lived in Britain in the early part of the twenty-first century knew that from now on things would never be the same again. If truth be told the controversial issue as regards the systematic persecution of illegal immigrants was hardly heard of any more; it had simply disappeared.

After Europe had collapsed as a political force, people were no longer interested in the race issue. All illegal immigrants had either been sent back, or had simply disappeared. The question of how to get rid of the foreigner no longer existed in the media. These things thankfully had all been sorted out at a conference in the UK. The issue now dominating the headlines in the media seemed to be: the duty of the individual to his or her country?

I guess to understand what had happened during the Race Wars and the Great Economic Famine: why a new right-wing party had come to power in the UK. and expelled so many foreign aliens, you must study history. If truth be told, people living today in Britain were not really sure why it had happened; of course some had ideas, but for the majority it was still a great mystery.

What can be said here is that after a new right-wing party had come to power in the UK, they introduced an identification system that tied the individual to the country for life. They were hard on illegal immigrants coming into the UK. The new regime put in place a radical immigration

policy that was as good as watertight. In no time at all, they systematically deported all undesirable aliens from Great Britain: people without passports, or identification cards. In fact, after being interviewed many people were expelled, good and bad, white and black, believers and unbelievers.

It went without saying that everyone in the UK, in the twenty-first century, had to carry an identification card around with them. No one said anything about this today, for carrying your ID card was as natural as wearing clothes in society - you simply did it. You got up in the morning, washed, put your clothes on, had some breakfast, and before going out you put your ID pass in your pocket. Not to carry your ID card around with you would have been to go about naked in society: for it had all your details on it. Everyone knew they had to carry their ID card with them. The plastic card had your name on it, and on the back of it a declaration saying that you were British, promising to defend the island against any alien forces.

Indeed the law now stated that anyone who could not prove their British origin, within a month of being asked to do so, would be quickly deported abroad by the Committee of Immigration, to a country of their choosing; if none was forthcoming then they were simply put on a plane, along with those who had made their choice, and sent abroad.

The fifth column had been defeated. It is true to say that since the late 20th century Britain had been a hotchpotch nation of nationalities. However, whatever it was that had upset things in the past was no longer present, many illegal immigrants, as well as people who had received citizenship, got out when the troubles came about. Looking back, it was strange how during the bad times many people had left of their own free will.

As has been stated, Europe in the twenty-first century was all but finished as a political concept. Once more Europe was full of individual states again; many had changed their names, and many were thinking of doing so.

Scotland had changed its name to Northland, some wag had suggested Wetland, but after a great debate and a referendum it was decided to change the name of the country to Northland. The new people liked this: for they said it gave them, along with the image builders, a fresh start.

Northland was now a multiracial country with little or no connection with its historical past: Scotland. England for whatever reason had decided not to change its name; Britain was still the name given to the 4 countries of the UK. Now that Britain had redefined itself, it was continually searching for new ways to make itself great again. It may not be a world leader

any more, in the twenty-first century, but then again every other country in the world was in the same position. They were all fighting for their survival in the post nuclear age. The Chinese were the only ones who had taken land during the last decade. Economists reckoned that it would take years, for the European countries of the world to get back up on their feet again. However, during the troubles the 'Real Brits' had stayed and that's what mattered. Well, that's what the papers said anyway.

2

Lucy Lovelock was not clever in an academic sense, but in a strange way she had the knack of knowing things that were not apparent to the eye. The young eighteen-year-old girl seemed to sense things, hidden in nature that few around her could really understand. One of her talents was to grasp, quite quickly, what other people were really like.

Yes, Lucy could tell where they stood in the great scheme of things pretty quickly. It was as if she could trace them back to the Garden of Eden, before the fall. This immediate search as regards another fascinated her. You see Lucy knew that most folks, out there in the world, portrayed an image contrary to the one inside them, "This is how you fit into society," she told herself.

However, Lucy could see through their society image in a flash, and get to the core of a person pretty quickly. The outward expression and the inner feeling never ceased to amaze her. She never questioned the validity of an image. In seconds, she could tell if they were agents of the devil, or good people. This was a God given talent, and she knew it.

Needless to say, after she detected a malignant spirit inside a human body she would avoid it like the plague. It didn't matter who they were and what positions they held in life. Of course good spirits she liked; Lucy had many friends, young and old.

As she lay in bed this morning waiting to get up, Lucy remembered last night sitting at the dinner table. "They are the children of the evil one," she had overheard her grandmother say to her mother.

Apparently, two young men had broken into Mr Lloyd's house; Mr Lloyd lived next door to them. Lucy had never heard that expression be-

fore, “They are the children of the evil one,” and it took sometime for it to sink in. After giving it a great deal of thought, she reckoned, “People must be born good or bad - that must be it.”

For some time now, she had held the view that all children were good, and it was only later on in life - for some reason when they became adults - that they became bad. She knew that the phrase was meant for adults, in this case the people who had broken into Mr Lloyd’s house, but it still made her shiver when she thought about people being born good or bad. To counter the evil world she wrote in the corner of her diary: “It’s an evil world, be wary of company: men and women.”

Morning, noon, and night, so that she would not forget it, she repeated to herself: “The children of the evil one - avoid them like the plague.”

She remembered that her grandmother, last night, had gone on to say, “The strange thing is that you never suspect them till it’s too late. It’s always the same. You read about it all the time. He was such a decent man. He came from such a good family. No one can believe it... ”

So at eighteen years of age, Lucy had a firm understanding that there was more evil in the world than good, but thankfully she believed that goodness would not be overcome by evil. Yes, our Lucy, even though she knew she was living in an evil world, was an optimist.

“The lesser cannot give rise to the greater,” is what her grandpa said last night, when he piped up at the dinner table.

At that moment, Lucy thought about getting up, then for some reason she thought about the men she bumped into in town at the weekend, “They continually snipe at each other trying to undermine the other. They seem to live just to hate each other.”

In fact, she had rarely met a good man in the city: one who listens and tries to help, and who does not stand in the way of others. Lucy liked going to church on Sundays, and when she was on her own she prayed. She loved reading the bible, books on religion, as well as history and fiction. It was just so interesting how it all panned out in her young clear mind, and rather frightening too. “The devil,” she told herself, “when it enters the body tries to destroy the mind.”

She loved religious images: peacocks, doves, fishes, bread, water and wine, to mention a few. Indeed now in her late teens, she saw everything in life as symbolic. She loved images of the natural world too; the ones she saw in paintings and in books. Lucy loved the human soul when it portrayed love and beauty. She felt she could empathise with other souls no matter where they were in time and space.

Lucy of course - like everyone else in the world that she had come across - had an image of herself. Her subjective view was: "A girl in a whirl."

However, at times life was just too much for her, and she would become a dreamer; Lucy loved to watch the world go by. Most people who knew her, she reckoned, would agree with the: "girl in a whirl," image. The majority of people who knew her liked her. Lucy, however, felt that the majority of people, in the twenty-first century, were evildoers up to no good and, in one way or another, Lucy made fun of them.

Sometimes she would forget herself in front of those she knew, and say something that she really felt. Just last night sitting with her mother and brother, gran and grandfather, at the dining table, she said out loud: "Mr Dodds is an adulterer, a lecher."

At times like this her mother did not know what to make of her daughter, "Where do you get these ideas from? No one normal speaks like that," her mother had replied. "You must stop this, Lucy."

Naturally, her mother was worried when she heard her say things like this, but she would just shrug them off, "Grow up," she would usually retort, and walk away from her.

In her quiet moments her mother really did hope that Lucy would grow out of this phase soon. "The new job will change her," she kept telling herself.

Mr Dodds had come on the scene not long after her father had died. In fact, two weeks after he had died. Lucy did not know where he had come from, but after one look at him she knew all about him. Lucy felt her mother treated her lover like a stray dog. Most nights he would come into the house via the back door and, after a drink and something to eat in the kitchen, her mother would let him out again - back out into the evil world where he had come from.

Lucy knew that when she was staying at her friend's house, Jenny Penny, Mr Dodds would stay the night at their house: for when she returned she quickly sensed his lecherous evil spirit everywhere around the house. She was sure he had been in her drawers looking at her underwear. She was sure he had been through her dresses in the wardrobe. She shuddered to think what he was up to.

Apparently, Mr Dodds had a Balder complex: he kept having nightmares about dying. Like Potamiaena someone stood before him in the night, and put a wreath about his head. Mr Dodds because of this needed to drink. She wondered if her mother and him were swingers. "Do they meet up with strange couples when I am staying away?"

At first, she had liked the modern house that her mum had bought on the outskirts of Glasgow, but the novelty had soon worn off. Even though her grandmother and her grandfather lived close by, Lucy now felt it was a small room and kitchen in a nondescript part of the country.

After her father had died her mother wanted another house, something small and practical, and above all something new; for some reason the images of the past had to be forgotten. This was strange for everyone who had known her father had a good word to say about him. "He was a great lad Jack," people still said to her today.

And in a strange mysterious way his good spirit still filled Lucy's life. She talked to him in her daydreams and secret night-time conversations. She called him by his first name: "Jack."

The only photo she had of him she kept in her purse. The photo had been taken on a beach in Newquay, England. Sometimes Lucy would lie in bed at night, and hold the photo up to the light and just smile at it. She wanted to run from the water to him, she knew he would put his arms out and grab her by the waist and throw her up into the air, "Lucy, my girl!"

Her mother had thrown everything out that belonged to him. Lucy did not know where everything had gone to, but without doubt the past, in the material sense, had to be forgotten about.

Lucy remembered her father, as a fit man, always laughing and joking, "You'll be famous when you are older," he used to say to her, before kissing her cheek, that was her earliest memory.

She knew that to ask her mother about her father was to send her into a bad mood for the rest of the week. Lucy understood that she would have to create a new life for herself, but she promised herself that she would always treasure the images of the past that were inside her, especially those of her father.

Up until last year her mother, Mrs Lovelock, had been the manager of an Italian restaurant in the city centre of Glasgow. Although her daughter had never stepped foot inside the place, Lucy could well imagine her mother bossing everyone around, just like she did at home.

When it came to the opposite sex, and it did often, her mother talked about men, as if they were creatures of pleasure and disgust. She took great pleasure in pointing out to her 18 year old daughter the bad types, "Don't get involved with them," she would say when they passed her by on the street.

Lucy, however, felt that her mother in a strange way seemed to like the bad types, and had first-hand experience of them.

3

That morning in her usual carefree manner, Lucy came down from her bedroom and immediately flopped down onto the settee in the living room. Presently, she picked up the paperback book that she had left there last night, and she started to read it again. It was a book with a wonderful title: *Christian Mystics*, by Ursula King.

After a few moments she looked up and noticed the time on the digital clock on the bottom of the TV screen. It was 7 a.m. "What's mum watching?" she thought to herself, as she looked for the remote control to switch the clean-cut presenter off.

Breakfast TV this morning was all about the eternal housewife: "Naturally, things have changed over the years," said the smart presenter, "but a good wife still manages the home, even though she spends more time at the office and the gym."

Mercifully, she spotted the remote control lying on the floor not far from the settee; Lucy quickly grabbed it and switched the unreal image off. Lucy had once suggested to her mother that they give up the licence fee and stop watching television. Her mother on that occasion had gone ballistic - as if the oxygen that kept her alive was just about to be switched off, "Oh, we can't do that - don't be so stupid!" she had screamed at Lucy.

After remembering this, Lucy let the remote control fall out of her hand between her legs, and she curled up once more and started to read her book again. She would have cereal in a moment and a cup of tea.

Nancy Lovelock, her mother, had been in the kitchen since half past six. Mrs Lovelock felt that this year she would stop eating supermarket food, and make everything herself. At the beginning of every year she always

started off doing something different, and this year was no exception. It usually lasted till the middle of the fourth month. Hearing no TV presenter's voice from the other room, Mrs Lovelock smiled to herself, and then she went through to the living room to see her daughter. "Good morning," said Mrs Lovelock on arrival, in a happy relaxed manner. Then she stated the obvious, "You are up early."

Lucy, dressed in a pair of thick tartan tights and a black thermal top, smiled back at her. Then she looked down at the page of the book she was reading, and replied, "Well, since I start my new job today at 10 o'clock, I thought I would relax a bit before getting ready."

Her mother, dressed in a long padded pink dressing gown, paused for a moment. Mrs Lovelock looked down into the baking bowl that was in her hand, as if in a strange way connecting with long ago answers hidden in the dough. Innocently she asked her daughter, "What are you wearing today, Lucy?"

"I was thinking of going like this," replied Lucy coolly.

Her mother, knowing how daft she could be, exclaimed, "Now Lucy this is a good job! You know how important it is." And after shaking her head she paused, and said, "Remember you only get one chance in life to make a good first impression."

Lucy wondered if it was really a good job, but she said nothing, except, "I promise, I will get ready soon, mum."

Mrs Lovelock, feeling better now, sang in a sing-song voice, "Later on today I am going to cut the grass," and after a pause, in a slightly tentative voice, she added, "Mr Dodds is picking me up at four o'clock. We are trying to get a grant from the Enterprise office in town so that we can start up our own new business. If I'm not back in time for tea, you know what to do."

Lucy couldn't help but think how strange it all was, for he was a nondescript alien from planet Zob, and her mother an outgoing person. "How in the world you and him got together, I will never know," she wondered to herself, as she stared at her.

To cover any embarrassment that may have surfaced, Mrs Lovelock added, "We will certainly be needing more money now that we have taken on this place."

Lucy, for some reason, at that moment was thinking about the dramatic last decade that her mother had lived through. It seemed to have everything in it: war, famine, pestilence, and of course above all great art. Her mother had not only lived through momentous times, she had brought

a child up as well. Lucy knew they had been lucky to survive it. Lucy, as she closed the book, wondered to herself, "Why did the Race Wars happen?"

Her friend Jenny Penny had told her that the devil had been waiting for 100 years for his chance to stir things up. Jenny had fantastic views on everything, and Lucy loved her for it. Lucy, however, could not really understand why it had all happened. She kept on asking herself: "Why did people turn against each other? Why was it where you were born was important? Out of the blue, Lucy asked innocently, "Mum, why did the Race Wars happen?"

Mrs Lovelock did not know what to say, so she just sighed, as if exhausted, then replied, "Oh God, you can ask the questions at this time in the morning."

And as Mrs Lovelock picked up a video game from the floor she glanced over at her young son, who was sitting quietly in the corner. "Ryan why don't you watch what you are doing with your things - someone will trip over them."

Ryan slouched up in his favourite chair by the fireside never budged. In his usual way, before going back to his video game, he slowly nodded, lifted his eyebrows, sniffed, and in a deep false voice, said, "Right mum."

Lucy loved it when her brother got into trouble. Knowing that he would soon be sixteen she said what she always said to him when he annoyed her, "Oh, why don't you join the army if you think you are tough!"

"Why don't you shut up," he snarled back.

"Now Ryan," cried mum, and after she had added the familiar phrase, "be nice to your sister, she is the only one you have got," Mrs Lovelock shook her head.

Lucy looked over at her mother and asked again, "Why did the Race Wars start, mum?"

Standing there in the middle of the room Mrs Lovelock, in her best academic voice, replied, "You must have read about it," then after a sigh she told her, "On a certain date many years ago a terrorist group using high-powered weapons nearly brought the West to a standstill, and since then they have kept the West occupied with terror attacks. When the economic famine came along people for protection, since their livelihoods were threatened, were drawn to what can only be described as extreme politics. Leaders emerged, and all sorts of fanatical movements sprang up. Soon parliaments all over the West were feeling their influences. Like never before, nationalist fervour was fed through the media to the people. Many countries in Europe sent back foreign people to where they thought they had come from. Many people left of their own accord. In some countries

citizens had to prove that they had lived for 20 years in the country before they were allowed to remain there. Needless to say people all over the world started to drift back to whatever country they felt their ancestors came from. This of course caused economic mayhem."

Lucy sighed and after thinking about what she had just heard she laughed, and said, "Oh, is that all."

Her mother smiled at her as if wondering what sorts of things would happen to her daughter in her own lifetime. And Lucy, as if to take part in this scene, watched with interest as her mother's dark eyes drifted away into the future, then back to the present again.

The history of the Race Wars and Great Economic Famine had been well documented in videos and books, but to Lucy it still seemed unreal. She reckoned, "Dark forces must somehow hide themselves in time; they must always be there ready to explode."

She felt that unless you had been around at the time of the Great Economic Famine and the Race Wars you could not really make sense of it all: exploding buildings, people running out of office blocks screaming. It had certainly been an age of terror and famine; millions of people had been killed in the Middle East. There had been attacks on London by the ITS: International Terrorists Society.

Around the time of the Great Economic Famine and the Race Wars, some people had given up living in homes; for a time they had inhabited the underground stations where the trains used to run. Property prices slumped. In the hope of creating a new world order, many politicians and academics throughout the world had done likewise and had gone underground.

After pondering many heavy questions about the last decade, Lucy thought about her own life, in the twenty-first century. There was a feeling around today that people were starting to create a new world on top of the old one. The Race Wars and the Great Economic Famine thankfully were in the past. Yes, things were not too bad now.

At the moment, there was a resurgence of teen culture, after many years of it being non-existent. Many new bands were starting to tour again. It is fair to say that in Great Britain in the twenty-first century you could go out every night in relative safety, but if truth be told no one really felt safe. In the cities gangs of people still roamed around, and sometimes you would hear of killings. Thankfully, the killings had not affected the people in the reasonable areas where Lucy lived, with her mother and brother. Some rich people not far from where they lived had formed local militias to protect themselves. However, now was not the time to think about these

kinds of things, Lucy wanted to live life and live it to the full. She wanted to forget all about the past and think about the future, and what type of world she could live in. Lucy from now on would create her own values.

Thinking that her daughter could not care less about the last decade, Lucy's mother thought she had better give her another history lesson. In a serious tone she said slowly, "Well, I don't know, they say it was an economic war; I suppose all wars are economic. Anyway, countries in Europe around this time became suspicious and angry with each other. I guess the amount of labour being transferred from poorer countries to richer ones must have had an unbalancing effect upon them. It is the old story when things are not going too well people look for reasons and excuses to create wars."

"When the Great Economic Famine came about, the majority of people in this country ended up on state benefit. And to get out of this situation the people voted in a neofascist government, Right4youparty.com: four of course, being the number of countries that make-up the UK. The right4youparty put forward an immigration policy of deportation of all ethnic minorities who had not been naturalised: in effect if you were not a British subject by a certain date, you had to go back from where you came from, or to a country that would take you. People felt that foreign nationals had been placed in the U.K. by the old European Union to unbalance it. Anyway, foreign people soon got the message that they were not wanted, and they slowly drifted back to their country of origin, or to a country they felt they belonged to. Not many immigrants wanted to stay here anyway with this lot in power?"

"The European Union subsequently collapsed and most of the countries made themselves into single states again; some changed their names. Many right wing parties came to the fore at this time throughout Europe, some more extreme than others, and of course they did likewise. Many other right wing parties in fact traced the origin of a subject back two or three generations. If they hadn't been properly naturalised they too were sent back to where they thought they came from. What that left was something new: a dominant multinational right wing culture that had no history to burden it. The strange thing is that this is what some people were against in the first place. It's all up there on the web, you know, if you want to read about it."

Feeling the tragedy of it all, Lucy put down her book and said, "How ghastly. It must have been a terrible time," then she added quickly, "I saw some white refugees, yesterday. I think they were from Poland. They were

being taken off the streets in the city centre, and put into trucks. You know, I felt sorry for them."

Ryan, her brother, looked over at her, "You would," he said coldly.

Her mother, as if happy with the grownup conversation so early in the morning, smiled. Then she answered in a worldly tone, "Yes, you hardly see migrants any more; I remember a time when the city was full of refugees and immigrants. They were everywhere, working in supermarkets, in restaurants and pubs, standing on street corners, on the buses."

Then for some reason Mrs Lovelock, as if wanting to forget the past, tried to change the subject, "Well, let's not talk politics, at this time in the morning, I'm just glad we all came through it. Think on the bright side: all the countries in Europe have reinvented themselves; everything is new again. And even though work is still in short supply, I am sure our wonderful new right-wing government will develop the talents of the young in colleges and universities so that everyone can enjoy the benefits in the future."

Looking at her daughter, Mrs Lovelock added affectionately, "I am so glad that you have got a start somewhere, Lucy. Now do your best, and I am sure you will be a great success."

For a moment, Lucy thought about the job she had applied for. She knew that she had been lucky to get a start somewhere. In fact, at the final interview the personnel manager had said that there were over 100 applicants in for the Controller's vacancy. Yes, indeed Lucy had been lucky, especially since she had refused to go for a genetic test so that the company could see what her genes were like. Thankfully, Mr Paton, the minister of the local church, had opposed this. He had written a nice letter to the company. The church was going through a revival at the moment; many people were joining up and taking part. This definitely had an effect on business and commerce.

The Academy did not want any problems with the church. Nevertheless, they claimed that 95% of people who took the genetic test were fast tracked to better jobs, relevant to their talents within their media group. However, something told Lucy that these statistics were false and that falsifying information was somehow part of the business world. Companies she reckoned suited themselves when it came to information and statistics. How they did it, and why they did it, was a great mystery to her. "Just part of the evil world," she told herself.

What fascinated Lucy was the truth. "What is it? Where does it come from? Why does it go from here to there, from me to you so to speak? Who has access to it?" Lucy gave a great deal of thought to these kinds of questions; at weekends she loved discussing them with her friends Jenny Penny,

and Gina Cappuccino. By the way, her friend Gina hated politics; Gina was only interested in fashion. Needless to say, Gina's great pastime was of course sitting in café bars in Glasgow, drinking coffee, smoking and reading fashion magazines.

Sometimes Gina would pick up African men and take them home. She did this because she thought her father was a racist, and she loved to watch his face, and 'the steam pouring out of his ears,' as she put it, when she introduced her new found friend to him at the dinner table, 'Oh dad this is Mandingo from the Gambia.'

Jenny Penny reckoned that misinformation, or lies as she put it, were used to control people. When the girls got together Jenny always ended up saying to Lucy, "People are controlled by reacting to events in the media. If there is no reaction, then there is no control - think about that."

And here she was today going to work for an international media company that by all accounts controlled the nation by putting words and images on a screen, "Ah well, should be fun," thought Lucy to herself.

However, after much thought on the subject, Lucy concluded, "As far as I can see, the Controllers in the television companies control the viewers by exciting their senses, by making them think that what is on the screen is achievable in life, when it is obvious to me that the two are incompatible." Like others who had contemplated the subject, she knew TV life and real life could never be the same.. CCTV is something different; for it does not control the viewer, it has no words to do so. All the same, TV is not of the real world. Everything on a TV screen is of a counterfeit nature: you can only understand this when you realise that TV has nothing to do with real life. Everything on a TV screen is of a counterfeit nature. The human mind must enter into this unreal state to understand it.

An image is captured, recorded, then reflected, and as soon as the image enters the human mind it only makes sense in a counterfeit way. Reflections as regards the image are of the same value: not of the real world. They are just vagaries in the head. Everything from then on can only be understood if you separate the real from the counterfeit, no matter the pleasure or pain. It so follows that the controlling TV image can only be operational within the human mind in this form. The Controller god in the media thinks he has access to the individual, in his or her living room, through the output of information (or miss information) and over a period of time he, or she, thinks that the Controller's office can regulate their TV thoughts. Now that was something to avoid, was it not?"

Yes, Lucy Lovelock, as you can see from the above was too smart for that. She knew that depending on the fashion of the time the illusions

changed. In the past, money was the big deal, and everyone wanted to be a millionaire, so the Controllers manipulated every topic under the sun as regards this subject. At that time, they had game shows on every night: Who Wants to be a Millionaire. Strike it Lucky. Now it was all about being a model citizen of the country. Charity shows were given secret money for sports relief to show the caring aspect of society. The viewers thought the money came from the people phoning in, but it really came from the state. As far as the press were concerned, the nation had to be built up again. This was just common sense, and everything in the press, and on the TV, in the twenty-first century was now directed towards this aim.

Again she wondered about the government agency, who were in charge of information and entertainment, and who controlled the television stations. On the face of it they were private companies, but nothing she had been told by her friend, Jenny Penny, is private as far as the state is concerned. Jenny too loved to avoid the Controllers in society. In fact, it had been Jenny who had brought this subject to the attention of Lucy.

At first Lucy thought her mad, but the more she thought about it the more she could see the logic behind the madness. It was all a great mystery how people were controlled by counterfeit images on a television screen.

If she was going to work for the Controllers, Lucy would have to protect herself. She would have to make up a brand new philosophy to escape the control of their evil minds. After giving a great deal of thought to this mercifully a plan formed in her mind, "I will become abstract from the people who work there. I will keep my free spirit intact. I mustn't let them know that I am not under the control of the media god."

She would imagine that she was deaf when watching TV. She would connect with the TV world only in a visual sense, thus rendering it harmless: wallpaper TV they called it. At all times, she would be aware only of her inner voice: for words and colours were the language of sense perception relating to the real world around her. Things would show up. Yes, there would be horrible things in this life that should be avoided, and forgotten about, but there would also be wonderful things too.

When she thought about the wonderful world around her, Lucy was sure that a spirit in the sky produced colours in the form of words, and it was these colours that would help her escape the clutches of the people who controlled the media. These colours told her an awful lot about life, and what was actually happening out there in the big wide world: what was true and what was untrue. Lucy knew she was a one off; she thought for herself. She communicated with herself on every level.

To get away from the clutches of the Controllers she would reduce the TV to a monitor: something now and again to be glanced at. She would, where she could, watch it in the main without sound. She would see the things in the room around her as more important than the TV. The old ashtray that her grandfather used for his pipe would be of more importance than the television monitor. And just to protect herself last night she put her favourite painting on the wall above the TV in her bedroom, and another one in the living room. This was just in case the TV was on and the Controller god was trying to pull her in and regulate her thoughts. Lucy knew the Controllers were up to every trick in the book, so she would be up to every trick in the book too.

She loved looking at natural still images: lines fascinated her as well as colours. Lucy since she was a little girl had always had the ability to work things out for herself. She knew what she liked. She had a mind of her own. The instinct of the common herd did not affect her in anyway. She understood the herd, but she would never be one of them. The Controllers loved the herd; they shared the same morality as them: always seeking the latest thing. Every now and then she felt sorry for the common people, but she would not join their ranks. What was important to Lucy was her free spirit.

As if to run quickly from the herd, Lucy sprang to life, "Well, mum, I better get ready, I suppose for my first day at the Academy of Entertainment."

After muesli, tea and some toast, Lucy went to the bathroom and washed her face. Then as usual she bathed her small beautiful breasts with cold water. Finally after this she stood back and looked at herself in the large bathroom mirror. Lucy always did this first thing in the morning. Every day she studied the outline of her naked body, and tried to imagine what others saw in her. Sometimes, she just imagined the bones inside her floating around. The wonder of it all: impulses jumping here and there, messages sent from place to place from fingertip to toe.

Presently, she dressed and looked at herself in the mirror again. Then after this, as she always did, she thought about the difference between the natural state and the unnatural state, the inner feeling and the outward appearance. Finally, she opened her favourite bottle of perfume: Joy. Lucy knew every thing about perfume: how the thickest petals contained the most oil, while white flowers tend to have more fragrance. It was mysterious to her, when mixed with the skin, how the oils from the perfume revealed certain things about the individual normally kept secret.

4

It may have been the first day of spring, but as Lucy opened the bathroom window she noticed that it was pretty misty outside, between the back garden and her next door neighbour's house. Just then, as if to warn her about the weather she remembered her grandfather's favourite saying, "Don't cast you clout till May goes out."

A few minutes later Lucy took the jeep out of the garage, and as she did so she pushed a button on the dashboard to activate the onboard computer. Then she spoke to the daft thing. In an upbeat voice, she cried, "Number one program, please."

She then activated the program by pushing another button, and low and behold the country route into town came on the dashboard. Being the adventurous type Lucy switched to manual control and took command of the vehicle so that she could steer it all the way into town. If she got bored she would let the onboard computer take over. She knew that when she got near the city centre it was all bumper-to-bumper into town at this time in the morning anyway.

Some of her friends had given names to their computers, but Lucy being a free spirit hardly gave it a thought. She thought it just a lot electricity and data; anything that was plastic was not all that important to her. What was important to Lucy was the colour of the sky, the trees, the earth, the expression on people's faces as they made their way to work.

Lately, she had become fascinated by her dreams, and what bearing on reality they had. The plastic arts, or whatever they were called were all right, but they were there to help you when you were bored, or feeling down.

Feeling bored at that moment, Lucy pressed button number 3 on the back of her mobile car telephone and waited for it to ring out. After a few seconds a polite strong voice, inside the tiny speakers at the side of the dashboard, croaked, "Kolanski speaking."

Knowing that this would be the only time of day she would be able to dominate him, Lucy screamed: "Is that you, Kolanski?" Why are you not up yet?" There was a pause, then Lucy added in a natural tone, "You will be late for university!"

The voice on the other end of the phone groaned, then the sound of a quilt being pulled over a body was heard. "Oh, it's you, Moongirl," the voice chuckled, "I might have guessed. Listen if you are coming round to see me tonight, be gentle with me, remember faith is under my left nipple."

Lucy and Tom had once had a fling, but he was far too odd for Lucy; he loved the quirky world that operated outside of the norm. Lucy remembered one time when she was working in a solicitor's office on a Saturday morning, Kolanski phoned her. It was a large office with some fifty staff. In his usual bold voice Tom Kolanski had roared, "Can I please speak with office junior Lovelock please?"

When the chief legal secretary, Miss Stack, had answered him back in an even more pompous tone, "No, I afraid office junior Lovelock has just popped out to the loo. Kolanski, wondering if he should hang on or not, inquired: "Has she gone to do a number one, or a number two?"

Well, there was no way back from that. The office spoke about it for weeks. His normal opening line, when phoning her was: "All men must drink from the fountain of Lucy Lovelock," Lucy liked that.

She told him, "I'm on my way into the Academy of Entertainment; I start my new job this morning inside the Controller's Office."

More like his old cultural self Kolanski interjected, "Yes, I hear they are growing bigger in the scheme of things - our new wonderful right wing government rate them very highly indeed," then he yawned, "Full of odd balls, if you ask me."

Lucy knew him too well to be bothered about listening to his ideas at this time in the morning, "I won't make the Space Bar tonight," she said regretfully.

Kolanski groaned again, "Why not?"

"Because I will be tired after my first day at work."

"Yes, don't over do it now, my sweet."

To annoy him Lucy inquired, "What are you wearing today, Kolanski?"

"My leather gear, darling"

"Sounds nice, Kolanski" sighed Lucy, "See you at the weekend."

"Remember, Moongirl, sex is an aphrodisiac."

"Wish me luck, Kolanski. Bye!"

It was a lovely crisp morning. The sun was shining, and down from the heavens were coming glorious colours: beautiful electric blues and greens. "Love it, love it, love it," thought Lucy to herself, as she turned up the music.

Everywhere she looked wonderful colours were now dominating the cold and grey world around her. The sun was beautiful as it shown through the clouds; everything was so vivid now and so clear. And just like the breeze, Lucy's early morning thoughts were starting to drift here and there, through the trees, moving upwards, outwards, into a new world. "Surely somewhere someone must be feeling this too," she thought to herself.

Yes, her thoughts would journey and on and on till they connected with some good soul out there in the universe. In a strange way at that moment, Lucy felt that it was as if an invisible sheet of glass had been put over the earth just to magnify its beauty. "It's such a beautiful morning."

At the traffic lights sitting in her new convertible jeep, Lucy looked here and there along the rows of cars. Naturally, she was thinking about how she could meet someone - her soul mate - and fall in love with him. Tom Kolanski was all right, but he was off his head. They could never be lovers again. The only time he was sane was first thing in the morning; after that he slipped in and out of as many characters as he could. "The philosophical Tom Kolanski: "Don't you know, Lucy, life is just a rehearsal for death - so let's be friends, come round and see me tonight. Let's have fun."

"Maybe one day I will meet a stranger, out of the blue, with no connection to anyone or anything. 'Hi how are you? I saw you yesterday…"

Sometimes, Lucy caught a glimpse of her strange man. He was a city worker; he would appear from time to time in her daydreams, sometimes he was walking, sometimes he was talking, always smiling. Then as the so-called real world came streaming back into her car from all the faces in the other cars around her, she thought to herself, "I wonder if I will ever meet someone that does not disappoint me."

All of a sudden, she caught sight of a young man looking at her. A passenger bus had stopped at the traffic lights, not far for the Academy of Entertainment. The tall thin animal like young man with shoulder length hair seemed to want to say something to her. Although, the bus was packed she could see he was standing not far from where the driver sat. The 44A bus she knew was heading towards the west end from the south-side. Lucy

knew that all the buses went by the university at the far end of town, for she used to travel on them before she had passed her test.

Her first reaction was to annoy him. So sitting there at the lights Lucy engaged the young man by staring at him as if interested in the lovemaking game. However, when she did not get the reaction she wanted she retreated a little, "Probably from one of the bad schemes, trying to make something of himself by going to the University," she grudgingly thought to herself.

Lucy could now see the Academy of Entertainment building from where she sat. She looked away from the young man towards the glass building and wondered what lay in store for her today: for she hardly knew anyone who worked there. The glass building of the Academy of Entertainment was situated just behind the flyover in front of the Science and Technology building near Charing Cross, about a hundred yards away from where she now sat.

She wondered again if she would like working there. The building she could see had a modern and friendly feeling about it. "But will it be modern and friendly inside," she wondered to herself.

Sitting there wondering what to do next she indicated to go left onto the motorway, then Lucy looked back at the young man once more. She could see that his hair was dark; it was shoulder length. This was unusual for all the young men this year were either cropping their hair, or getting it shaved off. She noticed too that he was smartly dressed in a single-breasted suit. She thought about winking at him.

Suddenly, out of the blue the young man standing there at the front of the single-decker bus opened his diary as if to check a date, or an event. She noticed that he quickly wrote something down inside it. And as the lights changed to green, before the bus moved off, he pushed the page of the diary up against the bus window so that she could read it.

Lucy quickly read the printed words written in capital letters: 'BEWARE OF THE CONTROLLERS.'

The young man, as the bus moved off, smiled at her.

"How very strange," thought Lucy.

"How very strange indeed."

"How does he know I am going to work for them," she wondered to herself.

"How does he know that I am going to work in an industry that tries to control people's minds?"

The computer programme, because Lucy had not done anything, reacted to the lights and sent her car through automatically. Nonchalantly, as

if to chase away the words in her mind, Lucy flicked a piece of paper off the dashboard out of the window onto the street. However, as the buses turned off heading for the University she thought about the printed words she had just read:

'BEWARE OF THE CONTROLLERS.'

"How does he know I am going to work for the Controllers - better find out as much as I can about them, before it is too late?"

Fascinated by this, as the jeep headed down the motorway, Lucy spoke to her onboard computer. She asked the computer to go through all the search engines as regards organisations in society who are against the Controllers in the media. Obviously, she wanted to get more information about the Controllers before she started working for them.

Usually, it took only a few seconds for the computer to find information, however this time nothing happened. Lucy spoke again to the onboard computer, "An organisation in society who is against the Controllers in the media."

This time the computer, as if annoyed, reacted and some words appeared on the tiny screen of the dashboard inside her jeep. Mary the voice of the onboard computer then spoke: "Over the years many people have voiced their unhappiness with people who control the media, but we have no information as regards any specific organisation, or terrorist's group, directly opposed to them in the twenty-first century. Please check other search engines, and data bases."

So she did, but no other search engines, or databases, had anything on them. She would ask Jenny Penny, or Gina Cappuccino, more about this when she met them at the weekend.

Lucy asked the onboard computer another question: "What is a Controller?"

Back came the female voice of Mary, reading from some well-known dictionary: "A member of an intelligence organisation who personally directs the activities of a spy."

Lucy thought to herself: "People in Television must be told how to act and behave. In short the decision makers control them. The controlling element in society in effect means that no one is free to do what he or she wants."

Lucy hated the idea of people being controlled, and here she was on her way to work for an organisation that by all accounts controlled the majority of people in the UK. She had never really thought about it before, but now she hated the word, 'control'. She now knew that the Controllers manipulated the media so that the masses could be controlled by television,

but she had not taken it seriously before. She had first come across the Controllers when Jenny Penny had pointed out two men to her in a well-known fashionable restaurant in town, "T. C." Jenny had whispered to Lucy.

And right enough, Lucy remembered at the interview she was told that inside the Academy of Entertainment, there is a group called the Controllers. The strange thing was that they were not a secret organisation; people knew how they operated in society. In fact, now that she thought about it, just before she had entered the Personnel Manager's office that day she had overheard a man's voice say to someone, "Peter we are the people who control society. The politicians seek our advice, and so do the media magnates. We shouldn't lose sight of that..."

5

As soon as she had walked in through the glass doors of the Academy of Entertainment, Lucy found the reception desk. She noticed the security guard with a blank expression on his face look over at her. The man looked at her as if she were part of some new terrorist group. He was tall, thin, unattractive and grim looking.

"Why are security guards a breed unto their own? They are just like bouncers at nightclubs. They all live in some fantasy world. They take great pride in knowing both sides of the coin. They have to keep certain people out while letting others pass through. They are all nondescript, never good looking, and above all they are arrogant..."

Lucy laughed at her own thoughts, then she smiled over at the security man as if to say, "Only kidding."

In a happy confident tone she spoke to him, "I have an appointment to see Mr Grindford."

The security guard immediately pressed a switch on the small board in front of him, then he waited for someone to say something back to him. Another security man behind him she could see was talking to a man in a dark gray suit. The man in the dark gray suit had his back to her. Although his voice was low, Lucy clearly made out his words: "I hear the Controllers want to employ more staff this year. They want to understand what is happening out there in the real world. They don't like movements beyond their control. I reckon the Controllers' office is going to be busy this year."

"You mean spies," said the other man, who then for some reason laughed, as if it were all a great joke.

"Yes, the agents are to bring back the information to combat any potential problems out there in society. While they are working for the Academy, they will make it look important in documentaries and films."

"How very strange," thought Lucy, as she pretended to be preoccupied by some thought or fancy? "I must keep clear of the Controllers, keep clear of their influences. It is true what they say: they are trying to make people think the same way. They want a nation of automatons."

The two men at that moment looked over at Lucy, then they quickly looked away; no one said anything after this. A security woman with a lined face, wet looking gray hair, and penetrating blue eyes appeared and stood next to the man at the reception desk. The woman looked at Lucy, then she quickly looked away. Not wanting to betray what she was thinking, Lucy too looked away from her.

The strange woman spoke, "Take the lift to the second floor and when you come out, turn left, you will see a sign on the wall that says Media and Information, someone will meet you there."

Lucy waited for a minute for her ID card to be processed. The Elite Security Agency had, as promised, been sent an official photo of her, via her personal computer last week, along with her fingerprints and everything else that had to be recorded by the Personnel Department. This was standard procedure: The Elite Security Agency had an ongoing contract with the Academy of Entertainment to do security checks as regards old and new employees.

The strange woman with the wet looking gray hair and penetrating blue eyes, before handing the ID card over to Lucy, for a moment stared at the photo in her hand as if to remember the face and name of the person in front of her for the rest of her life. Presently, the stern woman with the lined face opened a brown envelope, popped something inside it, then handed it over to the new start.

Lucy took the envelope opened it and clipped the temporary badge onto her shiny thermal jacket top. Then she pushed her small medium sized breasts out as a good will gesture to anyone who may have been looking at her at that moment, "Thank you," she beamed.

As if noticing this, one of the security guards came out from behind the two-way mirror and smiled at her. The man then slowly walked over to the vending machine that sold confectionery. As Lucy passed by him she watched him put is hand in his pocket, jingle some coins, and for a time just stare at all the colourful pictures inside the glass.

As arranged, outside the lift on the 2nd floor, Mr Grindford was there to meet her. She thought he was about 50 years old, although she noticed

he had a very youthful way of looking at her. This was confirmed by his light easy tone, "Ah, the new girl is here. Welcome my dear!"

Directly after shaking her hand he laughed, and walked back down along the corridor: "Right, now that we are all here we can start the meeting."

Lucy hurried after him down the corridor. For something to say she replied, "Is there a lot of us, sir?"

"Seven all together," intoned Mr Grindford, as he marched on ahead, "I know it doesn't seem all that many to control the masses, but believe me, Ms Lovelock, it is enough," then he roared with laughter again.

"Control the masses," murmured Lucy, "Quite a thought."

"Yes, indeed it is."

Lucy could see Mr Grindford was a clever man, he knew that life was something unpredictable, and at times a comedy of errors. She made up her mind there and then that she did not want to look at Mr Grindford for too long. Lucy felt he had a gift to assess things just by thinking about them. He was like her in many ways: he tried to get to the core of a person quickly; his motives though at this point were a mystery to her.

The strange woman at the reception desk gave off the same sort of vibe. Lucy would hide her true feelings from everyone inside the Academy of Entertainment, so as not to betray her soul. Trying to work it all out Lucy wondered to herself: "It's funny how one thing leads to another. One minute you are observing someone, then you are under observation: subject and object, object and subject, it never changes."

Suddenly, halfway down the corridor, Mr Grindford turned left, pushed a light wooden coloured door open, and there around a table were five new faces to look at. Lucy noticed some were young, some were old, some looked at her, while some looked away.

When it came down to it, what this life was all about, Lucy thought it a beautiful game, but winners and losers never really featured in it. To her, everyone seemed happy when they played their part. With this in mind she relaxed and smiled at the assembled team who were sitting around the large glass oval table. She noticed the room, although sparse, was pleasant and attractive. On the wooden floor there was a grey speckled carpet, and in the faraway corner on top of a large dark brown wooden desk sat a bouquet of flowers, red and white roses, in front of a view that looked east out over the city of Glasgow.

In the true spirit of the occasion, Mr Grindford rubbed his hands together and, with all the experience of a man who has reached the top of his profession, he said boldly, "Well, let me introduce you, Ms Lovelock, to

your new colleagues. Over here at the head of the table, next to where I sit, is Ms Crossland. Ms Crossland is our oldest member."

On hearing this, the middle-aged schmaltzy lady laughed, and retorted in a New York accent, "Yes, I can even remember when there were desktop computers everywhere in this office." For pure effect she glanced at her tiny laptop in front of her, and smiled as if to acknowledge the power behind the change, "They were the days, all right."

Lucy had picked up her staff uniform from the high street store last week: a cotton one piece suit. However, there was a slight alteration to the leg length, and it would not now be ready till Friday. This information of course had been re-laid by e-mail to the personnel office.

Lucy knew that from next week she would have to wear the Academy standard costume. Someone she knew in the past, who had worked for the Academy of Entertainment, had called it 'The ABBA gown,' it was certainly kitsch. The one thing she did not want to do was to be programmed into it like some media clone.

Naturally, she was interested in how the Controllers appeared in their staff uniforms. Nevertheless, not to be preoccupied by this she tried to look beyond them. After a moment or two of staring and smiling at her colleagues, Lucy took in the atmosphere of the room. She thought to herself, "It seems to me that the people who work here act as if they are being filmed. They act just like people who appear on TV. Even if I have to wear the staff uniform I will not be one of them. I don't want to end up like the people who parade themselves on TV every night. They may be bright, well-groomed, and articulate, but they are unreal. It appears to me that to get on in the Academy of Entertainment you have to look, and act, like one of those dreadful TV personalities. The Controllers want you to look as if you are a TV celebrity in one of their programmes, so that you will be rendered harmless in society: 'Life is TV,' is what they say."

Just then, as if reading her mind, Mr Grindford's voice boomed, "Yes, Lucy, you can act like a TV superstar when you come and work here at the Academy of Entertainment. No one will stop you; no one will mind. This is an industry of dreams." Then he paused for a moment, before asking her a question: "Who is your favourite TV star, Lucy?"

Lucky for Lucy his mobile phone rang, and after he had answered it, thankfully he forgot all about the meaningless question he had asked her. In any case, Lucy was going to pick an old actress that her mother liked, "How someone can go through life without having any real character, and who is dependent on aping TV characters is really quite fantastic," her

mind whispered to her, as she looked at the faces around her. "Who are those Media Zombies?"

Lucy Lovelock, by this time, had given it a great deal of thought as regards how she should deal with TV related questions. Lucy reckoned that TV only really effected her when there were words to go with the pictures. Having studied film at university she felt that Charlie Chaplin's Silent films were works of art, but after that it had been all down hill. Yes, there had been one or two masterpieces, but the corporations from early on had used TV to control people, their beliefs, their feelings, etc. In the twenty-first century TV had become an evil force. The evil was in the words, and because the world had more evil than good in it, the Controllers played on this and controlled the public by portraying the unseemly side of life. TV was very popular with unbelievers. It had become the voice of the heathen.

As far as Lucy was concerned evil spirits were everywhere in this ephemeral TV world. When vile words and pictures were synched together and transported into homes up and down the country, morning, noon, and night - well the Controllers were really onto something then. The Controllers she could see wanted authority over the viewers' minds. The Controllers' office was run by people who knew exactly what they were doing. To escape this evil Lucy would ignore the medium, and the people that she saw on TV. Lucy was lucky she could bracket things she did not like.

Of course, the evildoers in the large corporations to control the viewers promoted TV celebrities to the hilt. Everything was monitored: their personal habits, their feelings as regards this and that topic, but most importantly they controlled their sexual attitudes. They reckoned that if the viewer looked and behaved like their TV idols, then the viewers would naturally become like them: successful, sexy, and always on top.

Lucy would avoid TV idols like the plague. She would only think of people she had met and knew. And as regards this new career, when dealing with people at work that she did not like, she would make up other names for them, and as far as possible she would seek out their true character through this other name in her own daydream world. She would then respond to their character, as she saw fit, not to their unreal TV image that they liked to portray. Lucy loved the true world of her imagination. She knew she would always be free there.

She wasn't all that surprised to see that Ms Crossland wore a jacket over her one-piece blue and green ABBA costume. She imagined that most people over forty had to do this: knowing the shape of the human, in most

cases, becomes solid and uninteresting, when people get older, especially in women, “Like a pillar of stone,” is how her friend Jenny Penny put it.

“Next to Ms Crossland is Alex Coleman,” sang the Chief Executive.

Lucy made up names for them right away. "The Chief Executive, Mr Grindford, will be known as the Woodcutter: for although his manner is alert and friendly, his soul is cutting and uncaring. Ms Crossland, on the other hand, will be called Ms Quickdrip: for on the outside she is bright, but on inside she is dull as dishwater."

Just then, Alex caught between a smile and a grin, said, “I’m the one who knows all about wine.”

The Chief Executive coughed, then added, “Our Alex, after many years of being a gay bachelor, has just got married; he is the official wine connoisseur at the Academy of Entertainment. He makes it at home, you know. If you are lucky he may bring you in a bottle.”

Lucy thought him very unattractive and guessed that was why he had not married earlier. She could see that he too was well over forty. His dyed hair was combed forward to give the appearance that he was still young and trendy. However, Lucy sensed that behind the veneer lay a character timeworn, and gray, and when it came to the natural world he would have nothing to say for himself. No human was of any real interest to him any more. All the moves had been played out, and now like some clever robot he would just respond to them like a monad. As Jenny Penny would say: “Everything important for TV people is counterfeit.”

Lucy could see that the real images of life, love and beauty were stone dead inside him, “I will call you Chicken Noodle,” for you look like the man in the soup advert.

She would avoid the snares in the system that made a person become like this. Lucy would grow old and be happy. She would marry, give birth to others, and stay out of the limelight. However, when she thought about the latter she nearly laughed out loud, “Me out of the limelight!”

The Woodcutter, the only one standing except for Lucy, started to wander around the room. When he got to the middle of the table he stopped, and patted a thin man on the back. Then he gave a loud sigh, and said, “Now, this man here is called Jimmy Malone. Jimmy is in charge of all the editors; he gets to grips with them - keeps them in line.”

A painfully thin man, who also wore the standard academy jacket over his ABBA outfit, gave a quick look over to where Lucy was standing. He smiled at her, and said in a sharp confident tone, “Hope you enjoy working here, Lucy,” then he looked away.

In a born again tone, the Woodcutter went on, "Jimmy has fought the devils of drink and drugs, and is now teetotal," then the Chief Controller laughed his usual loud laugh.

Lucy wondered if work for Mr Malone was the new drug. "I will call you the Pencil Man."

"Opposite him is Mr Benson. David at one time in his career worked in the Far East for network TV. He speaks Mandarin like a native. You nearly got married out there David, didn't you?" sang the Chief Controller.

"Nearly," piped up the little man.

"David, I know, still studies Japanese culture; he is the propaganda expert for the Media and Culture Department. He never sleeps. He stays up all night, and watches TV until the morning, a man after my own heart," sighed the Woodcutter. "His main function here of course is to brief the editors as regards what should be offered to the public, in respect of foreign productions."

Lucy noticed that Mr Benson, as he stood up to shake her hand, wore the company badge on his jacket with pride. He also had a comical devious look painted on his thin white face. She could see he was dangerous. I will call you: "Little Hirohito," after the Japanese dictator she said to herself.

Lucy knew that some TV stations on the continent were independent. They were not under any commercial, or state, control, but there were very few of them. She could pick up their signals at home if she wanted to via her computer. Most countries in Europe bombarded each other with their trash, night and day. However, since The Great Economic Famine, and the Race Wars, many of them had shut down. The law in the UK now declared that it was a crime to pick up foreign stations without a special licence from the government.

Lucy's friend John had a friend who was working for a foreign station. He had a huge collection of sex movies. He was forever sending DVD's to her. Jenny Penny called John, "The Honeythief." It was even rumoured that Jenny Penny had taken part in one of his sex films. She had better remember not to say anything about her friends to Mr Benson, even if he could give them a special certificate and access to late night state TV.

Mr Benson looked every inch an oddity. He had a slight hunch and his small frame was comical, like a cartoon figure. Dying to speak the little man piped up again, "Yes, Ms Lovelock, I find cruelty a great leveller, that's why I have studied Japanese torture techniques, during the Second World War. And you know, Ms Lovelock, instead of being repelled by them, I saw method in their madness, and I came to admire them."

"I knew it," thought Lucy to herself, "a sadomasochist if ever there was one."

"Yes, there is a lot you can learn from the Japanese around the time of the Second World War," added Little Hirohito.

The Woodcutter gave a wry smile, "And finally over here in the corner, next to where you will sit Lucy, is Yvonne, our agency matchmaking consultant. Yvonne is in charge of programmes for our young entertainment audience."

With a pleasant smile Yvonne said, "Yes, I am the one to come to if you're looking for a husband. In fact, we have a great game show on just now called *Meet Your Match*." Suddenly her voice hardened, "The Academy don't like singles, Ms Lovelock. We like people to interact. To quote one of our catchphrases, 'Being single doesn't give you a tingle,' I'm sure you have heard all about it."

Everyone in the room, except Lucy, sighed or laughed. Lucy, aware of the blank expression on her face, thought she had better smile back and say something, "Well, I'm seeing someone at the moment, but if ever I'm on the shelf, I will let you know."

"Good!" cried the Woodcutter, and everyone for some reason laughed again.

Lucy thought about her friend Tom Kolanski, "God he does come in handy, sometimes."

"Lucy please take a seat, and feel free to take part in this morning's Controller's meeting."

The Woodcutter pointed to an empty chair, and after Lucy had sat down he walked to the top of the table and took his seat. "Right today's meeting is now open," he announced in a happy tone, as soon as he sat down.

Yvonne, after the Chief Controller nodded, read from her small laptop computer the minutes of the last meeting. In a well-mannered voice she reported: "It was felt by the committee that more airtime on the radio should be given to alerting potential students as regards placements still available for them at colleges and universities. Mr Benson proposed that the committee should investigate the possibility of research grants, for the purpose of understanding why students are buying more books and watching less TV. He alerted the Academy of Entertainment about the Mitchell Report on youth culture. This he felt was a worrying development. The report concluded that too much reading by young people in their private time would ultimately encourage original ideas in youthful minds. Moreover the report went on to say that original ideas in youthful minds would

never see the light of day. After a discussion on the aforementioned topic it was felt that regulation as regards human behaviour in society is something that the committee would like to see in its control, and that any movement, or trend, that moved people away from the media should be challenged. It was noted that as far as the early evening chat shows were concerned, the students, and young people in general, should be encouraged to interact, and not to be solitary. A free spirited lifestyle should be portrayed by the Academy of Entertainment, accepting all sexual preferences, but time should be given to confirm the unhappiness of people living a solitary life. This should be seen to be more of a failure the than a vice, certainly not something that we want to promote at the Academy of Entertainment. The policy for entertainment put in place after the Race Wars and The Great Economic Famine, in the main still remains the same: to develop a patriotic feeling towards our nation state."

Yvonne paused, took a sip of water from a glass beside her, then she continued, "Ms Falls, from the Advertising section, indicated to the committee that she would like to take early retirement to look after her elderly father. The committee agreed to this request, and a date was set for her contract to be terminated. Her position is to be offered in the press, and the usual in-house magazines; interviews will take place next month."

There was a pause, then the Woodcutter cried: "Well, that's it! Splendid!"

Lucy looked at him, then at the others; no one said anything, the language game had for some reason stopped for a moment. To break the silence, the Woodcutter rejoined, "Right, let's all have something to drink, and we will talk about where the committee goes from here."

"Yes, that's sounds like fun," declared Chicken Noodle in a sweet voice.

The Chief Controller picked up the small mobile phone on the desk, pressed two numbers, six, and one, then cried out, "Cathy, whenever you are ready!"

He then put the tiny phone back in its little holder in the middle of the desk, and sighed, "Time for tea."

Not long after this someone knocked the door and then pushed it open. The tea lady immediately beamed as she entered the room. The Woodcutter got up and, as he went to meet her, he cried with great zest, "It's a great game, you know, Lucy, this running the country, keeping people under control. You know, we have a saying here in the Controllers Office that if a person knows what he wants in life - then he has not been watching TV," and again everyone in the room, except Lucy, laughed.

The Woodcutter with a kind smile turned round and looked at her, "However, at times, we do need a break for a cup of tea."

Lucy smiled back, but she wasn't sure if she should speak or not. She watched the Chief Controller take a cup from the tray, and place it in front of Ms Quickdrip. After he had done this the Chief Controller winked at the silver haired tea lady in the blue and white overall. And the woman immediately beamed back at him. The tea lady, then put the sandwich tray down on the table by the window, pushing the flowers slightly back as she did so.

"Thank you, Cathy," said the Woodcutter again.

As she glanced at the faces around the table, the tea lady before going back outside the room contorted her face, as if they all knew what she was thinking.

When she had disappeared the Woodcutter clapped his hands, "Right, let's talk about why young people are not watching as much TV as before," and as he placed a cup and saucer in front of Lucy, he asked her coldly, "What do you think, Ms Lovelock, how do we get their attention - more sex?"

Lucy knew the answer, but she dare not say what she was thinking. Like most young people of her generation she had acquired the knowledge of how to avoid the TV genie. It would never be allowed to control her again. All the young people in the twenty-first century knew what the Controllers were up to: how they wanted to control the masses by manipulation of sound and vision through the medium of TV; they would have none of it.

Feeling under pressure, she replied like one of her old college lecturers, "I feel, Mr Grindford, that whatever it is that determines culture goes in cycles; there are of course high points, and low points. At the moment I think it is fair to say that this is a low point as regards the TV, and film industry. The underlying reason is interesting though. I think to understand it one has to take a step back and look at the schedules, and how television programs are being offered to the general public. For a long time, as regards drama and documentaries, what has been seen as quality programmes has been promoted by those from inside the industry, working at events and award ceremonies, etc. However, people no longer trust this view from the inside. They must have something to aim at from the outside."

For some reason the Woodcutter looked distracted, but Lucy felt this to be a ruse. When no one spoke the Chief Controller sighed, "Yes, interesting, Ms Lovelock." Then he quickly added, "Let me just run over again

what we do here at the Academy of Entertainment. You see, Ms. Lovelock, we have to control the masses. We control their senses from within their living rooms. We control what they like to eat, what they like to wear, what they find attractive, who they should admire, who they should hate. And we do all of this, as you are aware, through the medium of Television. To put it bluntly what we show on terrestrial TV, is what is allowed in society. Let me repeat, Ms Lovelock, what is on television is what is permitted in society. If it is not on TV, then it is questionable. The Controllers promote certain things. We control what information is available to the public. We control the topics and how they are to be viewed. We select the performers, the agenda and the forum. People who know Latin will realise that the word forum means 'what is out of doors,' after watching TV people of course go outside into society, and there they interact with each other. But when they come back home we control their movements again: for example what types of things are allowed in the bedroom - that's why we show sex on TV."

Everyone laughed and Lucy had some fun with this, for not so long ago she had seen some programmes promoted by the state: swingers, lesbians and homosexual fantasies, "Is this what he means, I wonder?"

As she stared at the Controller, Lucy answered her own question, "It probably is."

The Chief Controller stared back at Lucy, as he continued, "The great secret is that the masses think that they are controlling their own habits, but I'm afraid, Ms Lovelock, nothing could be further from the truth. And this is how we do it. Fear is the key. Find out what fears they have - play on them - then liberate them, and once you have done that you will have them in your control. For instance, if someone feels he has something new to say in life, then get him on TV, let him talk about it: for TV is not so much of a leveller as a pacifier. After he has said his bit - could be about corruption within the state, or something about mal practice in a government office - you wait and see, there will be hardly any reaction against it - or for it - from the viewers. I tell you no matter how outrageous the subject matter, nothing will happen. I know it is hard to believe, Ms Lovelock, but no upheaval will ever happen in society because of a TV programme, or whatever is said on a TV programme by a presenter, pundit or announcer. Remember this Lucy, TV seduces people, then it entertains them, that's all it does - nothing else."

Mr Grindford, as he paced around the room, laughed again, "So we can allow anything on TV without fear of a cultural revolution taking place within our country. Yes, once you have learned your trade, Ms Love-

lock, you will be able to control the minds of millions - now isn't that something."

"Just unbelievable," thought Lucy to herself, mimicking her friend Jenny Penny's voice.

Although, this was a serious statement by the Chief Controller everyone for some reason laughed at it. Lucy thought to herself, "Little does he know that the person he has just employed on his Controller's team, inside the Academy of Entertainment, hardly watches TV, and will never be controlled by the Controllers."

However, she quickly reminded herself, "I must learn to hide my free spirit. I will have to give the impression that I watch TV all the time. I will check the programme titles each morning, and of course listen to what people are saying about them, and if I have to make some kind of statement, on any TV programme, I will. Hopefully, people will be too busy to ask too many questions, and anyway I can always say: 'No, I didn't see it.' And when it comes to trash - as I'm sure it will - I will just say, 'Oh, I don't follow that soap.' Hopefully, no one will suspect me of being a free spirit - surely not. I will do what most young people do today: I will watch the moving pictures, but will always have the sound turned off."

All of a sudden, she heard the Chief Controller's voice say, "Some people, you know, Ms Lovelock, feel that the spirit world does not infiltrate television. I mean they just see pictures on the screen as meaningless harmless fun: wallpaper TV, I believe they call it. They reckon they can kill off our controlling influence by turning down the sound. Some people plead poverty and say that they cannot afford a TV, for the license fee is too much, thus staying outside our control. However, I am pleased to announce today that this will soon be countered by a withdrawal of the licence fee. Yes, our government will announce next week that they are finally going to do away with the license fee. You have got to keep one step ahead of the game, you know, Lucy."

As he walked around the room, the Controller rubbed his hands, then he added sternly, "No one is beyond the reach of the Controllers." Suddenly he paused, and for some reason looked at Yvonne, "As has been stated, Ms Lovelock, we believe here that we can change and regulate the habits of a nation through the medium of television. Yes, we can manipulate their beliefs and attitudes." Again he paused before continuing, "And this is how we do it, Ms Lovelock. Get them to switch on. That's all there is to it. Yes, that's it; once the TV has been activated we have them in our control. People will watch just about anything. They will stay up late at night, get up early in the morning. They will watch TV on the bus, in the

toilet, in the car. We maintain here in the Academy that as soon as someone switches on a TV, we have them hooked. You will learn more about this as you go along in your career, Ms Lovelock, but essentially TV is a drug: for when the TV is on - it is hard for people to turn it off. It takes very little intelligence, energy or concentration to watch TV."

Yvonne interjected, "Oh, Mr Grindford, you make it sound so terribly unromantic, can't you say that people fall in love with the images we produce for them."

Everyone laughed, then Mr Benson interposed, "Last night, I received in the post a Japanese film about sadomasochism, as you know my favourite subject, from one of our main distributors. I'm looking forward to seeing what the viewing figures are like after we release this one on terrestrial TV, next month. I'm sure this film will increase our late night viewing figures threefold."

Lucy noticed that his face came alive when he said the word 'sadomasochism'. It was as if he had just drunk a magic potion. She again wondered if she would like this job, "They say when you work for the Academy of Entertainment it's a job for life, but I don't want it to be a life sentence."

"A lot of Japanese people settled down here in the UK, after the Second World War, most of them however left during the Race Wars and the Great Economic Famine. Sadly there is only a small community here now," concluded Little Hirohito.

Little Hirohito when he did not say anything troubled Lucy. She felt he was a maniac. She felt he was at all times thinking about ways to manipulate her.

Suddenly, the Pencil Man spoke to her in a quiet, almost shy, voice, "The Academy, Lucy, have to take control of every aspect of life; we have to set boundaries in the imagination where people can actually go. You see, Ms Lovelock, people may dream about doing this or that in life, but when it actually comes to it, as regards what people can do, and what people can dream about, we know that they are two different things. For instance when one of our director's makes a film he knows fine well that everyone will identify with the characters, or places, and that they will have had already some relationship with them. He knows they will have seen paintings, and other artefacts as regards the period, so the director builds everything around this. He sets the limits within their imagination. This simple formula has been embedded in art since the beginning of time: the hero, the villain, the likeable rouge, the good man, the strange man, the kind man, and so on. It's the same with TV...

Point taken, Mr Malone," said the Chief Controller, as if he knew that to let him go on was to stray far away into unknown territory.

"You see, Lucy," the Pencil Man concluded, "People always see themselves at the centre of things."

Lucy thought once again about the DVD's she had got from her friend Jenny Penny. She liked watching them. The men making love to the women, the women making love to the men, who would not be turned on by this. Who was not interested in erotic love on the screen? Just watching them was to learn about the human race. However, although by this time she had had several sexual experiences in life, she knew that she could not yet control the graphic sexual images on the screen. When the man came on the TV screen she thought it fantastic and funny. Love and sex where wonderfully strange partners, though seldom she noted were they together. It was in the main lust and dominance, intrigue and pleasure. And yet in life coming out of this act came children. She knew that TV Sex aroused people. Lucy wanted to go beyond the images of the 'Love Stars' as they were called now on TV, and she tried to grasp what force lay behind their actions. "Don't fall into the honeytrap," is what Jenny Penny would say, "Don't kill the sex dream.' She was always telling Lucy. "Sex for the Controllers is something to be controlled for their own ends, not for yours."

Lucy, as the Woodcutter rambled on, let her imagination go again: "The mind must be split in two, one side must be good, the other side bad. The images that slowly creep into your living room from the Controllers have the sole intention of overcoming you by lust and evil. Lust and evil will always be used by the Controllers to entice you. State, or market related sponsored, sex must be avoided at all costs. They love to get you so mixed up that everything you see is only desirable as a commodity. The Controllers love you to worship their trash: functional sex, sex for the sake of death, sex for the sake of controlling you, sex for the sake of lust. The medium is counterfeit. I will therefore have to regulate my own mind; only true images that are of a beautiful and of a kind nature, not ones controlled by the Controllers, will I think about in life."

Like most bright young things in the twenty-first century Lucy read more than she watched. Her dreams were always full of love and passion, romance and travel. They were colourful and new, and above all they were real. They were from the world of the earth and the sky, from the water and from the air. Lucy sometimes woke up feeling all aroused, and she wished she had that fabulous new boyfriend there beside her, so that she could pull him towards her saying, "Love me till the morning light comes."

Although, one thing she never did was analyse her dreams like they say you should on TV. The TV Controllers maintained that everything in life came from the subconscious. 'Nothing is real in life. Life is unreal,' is what they were always telling you on TV every night.

"Nonsense," thought Lucy. "Everything in life that is worth living for comes from heaven."

Lucy wrote inside the back page of her diary some thoughts, so as to help her fight against this evil in society: Love; Be Natural; Be Yourself; Play Your Part; It's an Evil World; Help Others; Life is a Beautiful Game; Glide to Success; Be Perfect; Always Enjoy Life; Never Despair. Don't Wish for What Others Have.

Lucy thought she would end up hysterical, or frigid, if she delved too deeply into her unconscious sexual mind, and this would inevitably lead her to being controlled by the TV Controllers. She had just recently received a DVD from one of Jenny Penny's lovemaking friends. The young man, Ben, lived abroad and was part of some kind of new religious movement. She didn't know too much about him. The label on the DVD read: "Make Love! Kill Pornography".

"And good for them," thought Lucy.

The movement believed, like Lucy, that true love could only be played out by lovers, not actors and actresses who did it for the money, or for fame. The group filmed each other making love, and they gave their films away for next to nothing. So when someone wanted to watch people having sex, they could watch real lovers making love.

"This can only be good for society," was Jenny Penny's reaction to it all.

Lucy wasn't sure. "Were they really in love with each other?"

The porno movement, they maintained was controlled by Jews in America and Europe. What ever the truth it had been prevalent in Britain since the early nineteen sixties, and was still around today to some extent in most countries in Europe. However, this new religious movement was trying to turn the tables on the porno movement, who had promoted the writings of prostitutes as home entertainment. In their heyday, the porno movement had tried to make pornography acceptable to the masses by making it seem part of the daily diet on TV; now it was seen by the majority of people as a slave trade: the slaves being the actors who were paid to have sex with each other; for the sake of making some people rich: pornography.

Jenny Penny's friends were now sending their friends' films of themselves making love; it was the thing to do: 'Kill Pornography! Make Love!'

Jenny's friend Meia from Spain, a beautiful Latino girl who - the label on the DVD said - had beautiful honey-loving breasts, had not long ago met and fallen in love with a Japanese lad on holiday. Meia had sent Jenny a film of them making love. Jenny had passed it to Lucy. Lucy watched it just last night and, as she sat there in the Academy of Entertainment, she remembered the late night erect penis being pulled this way and that, and she had to admit to herself that it was wild stuff. "Maybe it is the latest thing after all," she wondered to herself.

"I wonder what Little Hirohito here would make of it. Should I mail it to him for one of his late night programmes?"

She could see Mr Benson in her mind's eye sitting in some small apartment all alone at night, his little frame tingling with excitement, as he held onto the remote control button. Lucy nearly laughed out loud when she looked over at him across the Controller's table. Now that she worked for national TV, Lucy knew that she would have to keep her private life and sexual thoughts to herself from now on, or they would be manipulated by the Controllers. To hide her thoughts she stared at the small mobile phone in the middle of the table and said nothing.

She had also written down the following thoughts in her diary on the subject. 'Rule number one: Nothing in life is interesting when it is pornographic. Rule number two: lovemaking has to be beautiful and real'.

Every young person in the twenty-first century knew that the beautiful act had been hijacked by the Controllers in the media. This was an area where she would avoid them at all costs. Lucy before she had started work in the Controller's Office knew that the Controllers went in search of exhibitionists. When they found them they turned them into actors and actresses, and of course the sex act on TV ended up as pure exhibition: a circus. I'm afraid only love would do for our Lucy.

As far as sex went she had seen just about everything that there had to be seen between the sexes on TV. However, she had not viewed it so much as entertainment, but as education. Even when she was younger she had felt the presence of the Controllers behind the performers, as if they were saying to her: "Look TV stars get everything they want out of life. Why not be like them? However, to be one you must be crude, you must be coarse, you must be pushy: for this is the way TV stars behave."

She heard the Woodcutter, as he continued to walk around the room, say, "Sex, you see Lucy, is a media topic. We sell all kinds of products with it, from cars to clothes…"

Sadly, it was all going downhill; Lucy was not sure if she wanted to work here anymore, but what choice did she have? She had had no other

job offers. She could always drop out of society. She had visited her friend Jane at the city Lap Dancing arena just the other night, but that too was performance art related to money, and working late hours didn't interest her much, although flashing her small beautiful breasts in front of all those men in the club did make her smile.

As she sat there around the desk with the Controllers, her mind went over the same thoughts again and again, "I may have been offered a job here at the Academy of Entertainment, but I don't want to become like a TV pundit. I will stay as far away from thought control as possible."

Lucy thought about one or two well-known TV stars. They were strange people - completely unreal. She did not like the commentators either, who appeared on TV every night. Lucy would avoid them like the plague, if she ever came across them in the office. "I will dream my own dreams; I will dream about real things, not manufactured here in the Academy of Entertainment. If I cannot see it, hear it, touch it, feel it, kiss it, then to me it will be counterfeit. Everything that comes via a TV screen must be vetted," she told herself. "I will remain free - that is the most important thing. I will at all times keep my secret self well away from the grubby people who control the minds of millions. I will earn my money, look after my elderly grandfather, hopefully fall in love, get married, and have children..."

"Are you still sure you want to join us Ms Lovelock?" the Woodcutter asked out of the blue.

Lucy had no option, but to laugh and reply, "Oh, yes it's the chance of a lifetime."

Everyone knew that the world had changed forever since the Race Wars and the Great Economic Famine. The twenty-first century was now very much about the good citizen; people were judged by their commitment to the state. Thankfully, at the moment things were quiet in the country as regards the threat from terrorists, although TV commentators still reported that terror attacks could take place anywhere, any time.

"I think we are on blue alert today," thought Lucy as she listened into the Controller's discussion.

Terrorists were so well organised in the world that people now took it for granted that every month they would strike somewhere in the world. The central claim among all the groups was that the West had used money as the main influence for development. God, they said, had been relegated into second place, manna first, and because of this they justified their attacks. When they were caught, the terrorists were paraded on TV. Usually they were pathetic individuals with hardly any self-esteem. They always

chanted the same things before they were sentenced to death: "Down with America! Down with Britain!"

Lucy did not want to think about it too much. In fact, the whole thing was unreal to her. She did not worry if they existed or not. The best way to deal with things she did not like was to ignore them, "I mean what good does it do you anyway listening to all those news reports about explosions and wars."

She no longer thought about the so-called main issues of the day. It was the people around her that she watched out for. She would know the children of the evil one by their deeds and actions. She would sense the evil spirit in the air, and act before they did her any harm.

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. Mathew 13:38/39

Sitting there around the Controllers' table Lucy told herself that she would go and see her grandfather after tea, the Old Moth as she liked to call him; he knew all about freedom. He was always chatting with someone about the spirit world on the Internet. He had even written a book on the subject: '*Free Spirit For Me*,' and because no one had published it he had put it up on the web for free. "That's the Old Moth, for you," thought Lucy.

The book was all about the difference between artificial intelligence and the real world. He was always saying to Lucy, "I remember the day when moving pictures on the screen inspired people to do something - all they want to do now is to control you.

The young person who today sat around the Controllers table inside the Academy of Entertainment shared his view. Granted there were always one or two instructional programmes on TV worth watching: like how to speak a foreign language, and some sports programmes, but you really had to search for them. On the whole most things on TV were worth avoiding.

As she listened to the Chief Executive go on and on about controlling the habits of a nation, Lucy thought about her favourite subject: what type of man she would like to marry. Sometimes she could see him in her mind's eye: his dark eyes shining, as he stared into her eyes, his black hair brushed back from his forehead, his thin body moving through the crowd towards her, his nimble manners, his attractive face, gentle kisses here and there on her cheek, then on her mouth, but above all she longed to hear his kind words: 'My beautiful Lucy...'

Back came the voice of the Chief Controller, "People just to survive need perpetual information. They need to be told about all the problems of the world. Information is power! Please remember that. Everyday the Controllers collect information, then we transmit it to the people..."

As Lucy listened to him, she thought to herself, "I will be at all times on my guard against evil thoughts, and the control freaks of the Academy of Entertainment; no one has ever marketed goodness: for it is a spirit that moves between people. It can only be transmitted through love."

Lucy sometimes told herself, "The truth is a feeling inside me."

From a young age, Lucy had been able to smile at the person she was looking at, and say, "Hello! How are you? Lovely to see you."

She felt that there were no big issues in the world today that were worth worrying about; there were no really big questions that she had to have an ongoing opinion about; sure countries had nuclear weapons, but using one was a matter of committing suicide. You didn't have to follow every event on TV, you could read an article in a newspaper, or magazine, and make up your own mind about it. At the end of the day, you voted in a bunch of people who passed laws in parliament, then you waited for the next election, and hoped for the best.

6

At coffee break inside the canteen of The Academy of Entertainment, Lucy sat all alone in the middle of the canteen. Feeling bored she read a woman's magazine that she had brought along with her. She sometimes had a book, or a mag, in her bag for this purpose. Lucy was not sure where her colleagues from the Controller's Office had gone to for a break, for none of them she could see were in the canteen.

The canteen inside the Academy of Entertainment was like some awful modern painting by some way out old-fashioned pop artist. Colour was the main theme, and it had far too much of it to be aesthetic or even interesting. However, one thing it had in its favour, it had gone back to old-fashioned cooking. The Academy had banned the microwave oven, and had employed a chef, or so the sign said behind the counter.

Lucy as she stood in the small queue glanced along the hot steel containers, under the powerful bright spotlights. Distracted by someone shouting in the kitchen, she looked up and read the menu on the small little blackboard. The simple sign simply said: 'Try our Home Cooking@theacademy. Feeling hungry she slowly moved the dark brown plastic tray from side to side, as she wondered what to order. There was only one other person in the queue now.

Just then, a fat sweaty middle-aged unattractive woman opened one of the steel containers in front of her. The steam came pouring out of it as the woman looked inside, and for a moment her face disappeared. The woman's happy red face, when it appeared again, smiled up at Lucy, "Hungry, my dear?" she uttered. Then she gave her a nod that indicated that it was all good stuff they sold here. After she coughed, she wiped her

nose, then she said in a humdrum tone, "Chicken pie is the specialty of the house today. Everybody is going for it."

Lucy smiled at her, then she looked inside at the food again. After giving it a great deal of thought, she ordered a sandwich. Seeing no one she knew in the canteen she sat down in the middle of the restaurant. Just then an attractive young man came over to her table holding a large mug of coffee. He had a huge cheesy daft grin on his face. In an easygoing tone he said, "Mind if I join you."

Lucy was quite taken by surprise. She looked at him again. He seemed quite ordinary, yet unsettled. He was nice; his face was different than most. He was tall, elegant, tender, nervous, and just slightly shifty. His husky voice running inside her would now of course be analysed and recorded in the usual Lucy Lovelock way. His words when listened to again she thought were elegant, tender, nervous, and just slightly devious. And although he spoke in the pretence of the time that he lived in, she sensed that he was unsure of himself. His words seemed to come through a blanket of contradictions that he had wrapped himself up in.

"No," she said in a quiet voice, and smiled at him.

After he had sat down, she noticed that he looked over at the counter where he had just come from as if he had forgotten something. Acting quite natural, he reflected, "What a place to work, eh."

Lucy smiled when she realised that the young man who had just glanced down at her breasts was attractive, around her age, and accessible. "I have just started today," she said, and smiled at him.

"I have been here for three years," he moaned, "You get used to it, though," then as if to congratulate himself he took a big drink of coffee.

After this, Lucy noticed he seemed to slip back into a normal everyday TV kind of dream world. Presently, he told her, "I work in the Department of Light Entertainment."

After he had said this, he put down his coffee cup, and officially introduced himself, "Lex McFadyen."

"Lucy Lovelock," she echoed and beamed.

Lucy, in the seconds that it had taken the man to sit down, say a few words, take a drink of coffee, had swallowed him inside her. Thereafter, impressions came thick and fast and fell into place within her imagination. Soon she knew everything about him. The one thing that stood out above all other things, she reckoned, was he wanted to be somebody. She could see he worshiped the TV personalities that he worked for; he wanted to be just like them. Even though this made her laugh there was something about his wispy manner she liked, a yearning for freedom - yes that was it.

"But will he ever be able to free himself from the Controllers?" she wondered to herself.

She liked it when people really meant something to her, "Surely, Lex doesn't believe in all that TV counterfeit control nonsense; surely his mind is not controlled by the people who work here at the Academy of Entertainment," and for a time she wondered about this. Then suddenly she came to a conclusion: "No, he is under the spell of the Controllers, I can see it; he believes that if he becomes a TV celebrity, he will get everything he wants out of life - God help him."

Sometimes he smiled at her, and at times she felt he searched deep into her being as if trying to find the real Lucy Lovelock. At first, she did not understand this, but it intrigued her, "What is he looking for?"

"You are a reader, I can tell," said Lex suddenly out of the blue, and laughed.

"Don't tell everyone," countered Lucy, "Certainly not in here."

Again as if coming up from no particular place in time or space, Lex declared, "I'm looking for a good book about the Race Wars and Economic Famine." Then he cannily asked her: "Can you recommend one?"

Lucy, to keep the conversation going, replied quickly, "That's funny, I was just talking about that this morning with my mother."

Lex laughed and said, "Yea, right." Then as if suddenly realising how important it all was, he added, "Really."

As soon as he stopped speaking, Lex again looked from her eyes along her neck, and down into a secret world that Lucy thought started somewhere between the opening of her silk shirt and the first button.

"I wonder what you will be like when you get your uniform?" he said thinking aloud.

Lex laughed all the time when Lucy was speaking, when nothing funny was being said. He even laughed when he forgot what he was going to say. The other strange thing about him was that he asked questions all the time. This of course was standard practice at the Academy of Entertainment. To ask questions was the sign of a healthy man in the twenty-first century.

Lucy did not agree with this; for her it depended on why the questions were being asked. The reason for asking questions for her was obvious: one had to try and find out what the meaning was behind the words. She felt that Lex would always ask questions from the point of view of defending himself. She could see that he liked the idea of freedom, but the Controllers had a hold of his mind, and moreover his spirit.

Jenny Penny reckoned that they had software for this. Jenny reckoned that once the Controllers had you, there was no way out. "You are theirs till you die." In short your spirit becomes part of their TV counterfeit world, and from then on you yearn for TV all the time, and all the information coming out of it.

Lucy guessed that the magnet of attraction for the people who worked in the Academy of Entertainment was to become a Controller, for then you could control the Academy and its output, and so far as you could the world around you.

To be happy in life, Lucy would have to find herself a life free from the Controllers. She would choose her friends at work wisely. She loved as a young girl going to church, and it was the same joyous feeling of freedom that still motivated her through her teenage life. She would work at the Academy, but she would not be controlled. When working she would accept the ways of the Academy of Entertainment, but she would forget them as soon as she walked out the door at night. The things that tried to hold onto her, the de rigueur topics of the day, would simply disappear when she left the building. She maintained that if she had the will, and the knowledge, to forget them, then she would be free. Her secret life would never be opened up in front of the Controllers. She knew that as soon as they knew her personal details, they would only think of one thing: controlling her.

Lex was a treat though, and she laughed at him. And when she thought about his polite manners she knew they would not last. They were polite bedroom manners, but still he was quite good company. Apparently, just last week he had bumped into his best friend, not far from the Academy of Entertainment.

"Had you not seen him for a while?"

Lex lamented, "He has treated me so badly, he has ignored me for over two years now. He has never called me since he got married, and he avoids the places where we used to go to. The last time I met him, I invited him to go along with me to a friend's book launch. 'Oh, yea, that sounds good,' he said to me, and grinned. But he never turned up. The Good Lord has blessed him with children, and he has never sent me an invitation to see them. I have been treated shamefully."

"How strange," thought Lucy, as she tried to imagine his wayward friend.

Feeling warm Lex pulled off his jumper, and as he did so up came his kaki tee-shirt, showing off a full strong light brown body. "This must be his mating sign," Lucy reckoned.

Jenny Penny had told her, "They always strip off as much clothing as possible, when they like you."

Lucy noticed that although Lex asked her questions, he did not like being asked questions himself. After all his mundane questions had been answered, she noticed that he seemed content to drift here and there from place to place within his own imagination. He was young at heart, yet old in thought. Lucy could see he was the only bright star out there in his own universe. However, he seemed to be living in two worlds: one magical and the other obscene. She could not quite fit the two together, and Lucy felt, "Neither can he."

For example, when he asked her, "Where do you stay? he directly after this, as if bored, moaned, "Need to get myself a new job."

Lucy wondered if he was a dope smoker. Dope smokers, since The Race Wars and the Great Economic Famine, had been outlawed by the state in the twenty-first century. But some young people she knew still smoked dope. The dope came into the country via ships and planes, hidden in every day things like fruit and veg. It was not possible to completely ban it; at one time it had been accepted in society, now it was outlawed. If you were caught possessing dope you were treated as a human reject by society. The courts sent you somewhere to be worked on in one of the many rehab centres in the city.

Sometimes in life everything would just go flat for Lucy, 'especially at her time of the month,' as granny would say. The world was just like a stark landscape painting: mundane and artless. The flow of life for some reason disappeared into the earth, and for some unknown reason everything was hidden there underground for a time. The stars in the sky were all covered by dark clouds. Then at other times every thing seemed new and bright again. Life was such a mystery. Anyway, this new job she felt would be interesting. She would meet interesting people, but she would have to watch out that the Controllers did not suspect her of being a free spirit. They were always trying out new ideas to encapsulate the free spirit. On the other hand, she did not want to be termed, 'A Stiff,' as her friend Jenny Penny would say. The thing above all things in this world was to stay free and healthy and enjoy life, live life to the full, and have nothing to do with media driven anxiety.

His last girlfriend was interesting though. The appeal, as far as Lex could see, was that she made herself attractive by being unkind. She offered love conditionally. Lucy knew that enmity existed between the sexes, but loving conditionally, 'You must love me when I tell you to love me' now that was something new in the twenty-first century. Lucy must remember

and tell Jenny Penny about this 'lopsided love' affair as she quickly termed it. "Being unkind to men for the sake of it was madness - for fun yes," laughed Lucy.

With all this nonsense going on around her, how would Lucy stay free? Suddenly, she had an idea. She would form her own group and meet secretly at night; they would help each other. They would make plans to stay clear of the Controllers. Jenny Penny would be up for it. They would at all times do things that they wanted to do and not what the Controllers wanted them to do.

"Got to go," said Lucy when she noticed that her fifteen minutes were up. "I've got to be back for the Controllers meeting at 3.30."

As soon as she got back into the room the Woodcutter was waiting for her. He slowly rose to his feet again, looked at her as she sat down, then as the Chief Controller walked around the room he carried on where he had left off, "Let's start with the free market - this may surprise you - there is no such thing. Take for instance literature: large corporations control books. They make sure that only books to their liking are published, and therefore they dominate the spirit of our time. Oh, sure there are one or two independent publishers who try and do their own thing - I am sure they sell a few hundred copies over the web - but they make no impact on society. You see large corporations trade only with other large corporations. Therefore, control remains intact within the various corporations. That is essentially the reason we only trade with other large media corporations. Controlling people is big business. You must learn this. Occasionally, you will have to encourage other corporations to do business with you, but on the whole it is simply a matter of following procedure. There are one or two small independent companies, here and there, dotted around the world that put TV programmes out in an independent nature - I mean without wanting to control the masses. However, they are not seen to be part of the controlling network, so therefore as a rule the Controllers do not do business with them."

The Woodcutter stopped beside Lucy, and took a drink of water from the glass in front of her. Then he continued: "As a Controller you must latch onto quickly what it is in society that people feel in accord with. You must exploit it to the full. It could be anything; the germ of the idea may be found in a book, a piece of music, or even a personality. How does a Controller begin to control? I hear you ask. Well, I will tell you. First of all a Controller imagines how it will effect people within society. The thing to watch out for is unusual unsettling material - that is material that will challenge the controlling element within society. Things that fit into society cer-

tainly don't make a splash, but things that challenge society do - and that's what we are after. We control the splashes that make the waves throughout the country. The best example I can give you is not to think of what is being said, but what the effect is on people. How is it effecting people in society? For example if someone produces a piece of music that is challenging, you will feel it right away: for people are just like animals, they do not like to be challenged. They like things to remain the same: constant, static. If it is a great piece of music it is the job of the Controller to bring it from its source and slowly lessen its impact upon society. It is the same with political ideas; open it up to the public bit by bit. Remember if you can't control it, be wary of it - that's the slogan we use here at the Academy of Entertainment."

Lucy to break the spell of the Chief Controller thought she had better ask a question. "Mr Grindford, how should you change something that you feel is too revolutionary?" And to get on his right side, Lucy thought she would paraphrase him, "Even though you are sure that this piece of music is revolutionary, as regards the masses, your knowledge of it and, what lies at its centre, is limited."

"Ah my dear Lucy that is why we picked you to become one of the Controllers: for you understand. You know that things do not always go according to plan. You know that not everything lies within your control."

The Woodcutter, as if to assess things so far, paused and looked at all the faces around him. Then as he walked on, he slowly added, "This is what you do, you monitor the situation: for time has a way of devaluing things. When a man on TV commentates about some issue - it may be political, it may be sport, it may be art - he at all times brings the listener's mind under his control, as regards what is happening in the world, by the authority of his voice. He sets the standards. He interviews people who are experienced in this field. Time is on his side: for TV is a timeless media. Yes, that's right, the visual aspect on TV is timeless, it dominates by this factor. As Wittgenstien said: "'The picture seems to spare us this work: it already points to a particular use'. This is how it takes us in. Remember TV is only interested in the counterfeit world, and what it means to people. If it is not related to this, then the Controller should ignore it."

When the meeting ended around 4.30pm, everyone stood up and started chatting amongst themselves, then one by one they slowly disappeared out of the room. Not wanting to be first to leave Lucy waited for a moment, and fixed her hair. After that she picked up her laptop, that had been given to her by the Controllers Office, then she got ready to leave. The Woodcutter she could hear was out in the corridor now talking to

someone. To kill time she glanced outside the Academy of Entertainment window that looked east over the city. Nothing moved, the city lay dormant as if it were a frozen lake. She heard someone coming along the corridor. Then suddenly a loud voice roared, "Good meeting this morning, Chief, eh! The new girl seems fine!"

Then she heard the voice of the Woodcutter roar back, "Yes, Peter, we need new blood in the department. The world maybe changing, but the people must be controlled. We all know what happens when they become free - don't we," and the two men laughed.

A warm sweat came over Lucy, and for a moment she didn't feel too well. Her throat was dry and her head seemed light. She saw a vision: someone was lying on the floor as a hurricane raged. She heard her mother say, "Remember Ryan." She thought about going to bed and never getting up again.

Suddenly, the door opened and in came the Chief Controller. The Woodcutter, as he swaggered in, sang in his usual loud voice, "Well, Lucy my dear, there is no way back now - you are part of the team."

For some reason at that moment, she thought about the young beggar man who sat under the arch just inside Royal Exchange Square, in the city centre. This recollection she contemplated must have been brought on by the despair of the moment. She had passed the young beggar man many times during the day. Lucy had nicknamed him Wolfie, for he looked just like an Irish wolfhound, with his thick dirty blond hair and his passive stare. She knew he had a twin brother; they were both quiet, not like the other dropouts who inhabited the city centre. Wolfie hardly said anything to anyone who passed by him on the street. In fact, when she thought about it, he never even rattled his can. He just sat there on the ground, and held out his torn paper cup in front of him, with his thick red hands wrapped around it. Sometimes she would catch a word or two written on a piece of paper beside his feet: 'Change Please,' or 'Help the Homeless.' However, yesterday she noticed Wolfie being attended to by a doctor. Wolfie had been slashed down the left-hand side of his face. The young paramedic, she remembered, was trying to do his best to clean the wound. It looked awful. It was not a clean cut; the blade must have been blunt. The blood seemed so red against Wolfie's chalk white face, his deadpan expression had not changed in anyway.

"Why had he been treated like this?" she wondered, as the Woodcutter pulled up a chair beside her

To make conversation, as he sat down, she told him the story about Wolfie, but after the images had been transferred from her mouth to his

mind she noticed the Woodcutter was not moved, "Down in the gutter! Sounds like a good TV programme, if you ask me," he grunted, "Subhumans with no wants, or needs; people wandering about just waiting to be taken," he concluded in a professional broadcasting manner.

Lucy coughed, and got ready to go.

"Lucy, a minute please," he said before she left the room. "I have a special assignment for you. The Woodcutter took a sip of water from the glass in front of him, then in a surreptitious tone, he added, "Tonight, I would like you to go to a bar in the city centre of Glasgow called Club Picasso, and find out what Sector Five are up to. As you will know, they are trying to undermine our culture. I hear they don't drink much, and are not into sex," after saying this, the Chief Controller roared with laughter. "What's your tipple Ms Lovelock?"

"Wine," said Lucy quickly, wondering if he was mad.

"Your cover is that you are preparing the ground for our new programme called, Scream TV, about world music and current affairs."

Lucy thought about last night how she had met her friend Tom Kolanski in town; they had gone to their favourite cosmic bar. The man who owned the Space Bar had organised a party, for the bar had been opened for five years now. The booze was cheap, but she could not remember any Sector Five members there. Members of Sector Five were mainly immigrants who had gained citizenship, or for some reason could not be deported. Lucy had had three glasses of wine and some champagne - it had been a good night.

Her friend at the bar had made her laugh, "Uncle Kolanski was a great man, you know. He used to dress up as a woman and go dancing. He liked men and women. They say, you know, he was a great lover."

At that moment, for some reason she noticed that there was hardly anything in the Controllers office. It had a very cold feeling to it when all the bodies had gone. There was a wooden desk, chairs, a table, a set of Venetian blinds, and a grey carpet. She hadn't noticed how clinical it looked before. Thinking about her assignment and the controlling element, as far as the publicans were concerned, she paused as if to wonder. Now that she worked at the Academy, she would need to do this. Lucy reckoned the controlling element lay in the colours that decorated their premises: they were always young, bright and gay.

She thought she had better say something to the Chief Controller, "Most of the bars I go to are into atmospheric music. The problem is that you don't get to know people all that well: for everybody just stands around and listens to the music."

At night, Lucy went to college, and it was this subject that The Woodcutter took up with her now. As he rustled some papers in front of him on his desk, he said slowly, “Lucy, I see in your CV you are studying films at college.”

Lucy somewhat surprised answered, “Yes.”

“Well, tonight I would like you to infiltrate Sector 5. Thank God we still have a few people who want to bring down the state - keeps us all in a job, I guess.” The Woodcutter laughed his usual laugh, then added, “God knows what we would do without them.”

Lucy had done most of her exams by this time, but had failed one subject. However, because it was a two-year course she could take her time and do it again.

“You know Lucy when things in society are going well everyone is happy, but when the system breaks down it’s terrible.” After a profound pause, the Woodcutter repeated, “Yes, I want you to go into the city centre tonight to Bar Picasso and infiltrate Sector Five; for this is where you will find the evildoers lurking in the shadows. They may indeed hate the West, but they like our nightclubs. You don’t have to sleep with anyone - we just want some information.”

Lucy held her breath and her tongue: “Thank goodness for that!”

The Woodcutter, after he had said this, looked up at her and said, “Like I say you are a researcher doing the groundwork for a TV special on night-club music - that’s what you will say to these galoots anyway when you meet them. You won’t be alone, we will have other people in the area; they will monitor your progress as regards what is happening.

The Woodcutter paused, rustled some papers on his desk again in front of him, then hollered, “They come over here thinking that they can change the fabric of our country, and they expect everything for nothing - not on Lucy, my dear, not on.”

For the first time in a while, Lucy was quite shocked, and she did not know what to say, “What do you want me to do?” she asked in a quiet voice?”

The Woodcutter answered back sternly, “I would like you to get to know them, see them at regular intervals in the cafes and bars, then after about a month or so you will be taken off the case." The Controller noticed that she was looking awkward. He said quickly, “I am not saying that you have to go out with any of them; you can make up some kind of excuse when it comes to dangerous situations.”

Lucy for some reason at that moment thought about her fascination for young Chinese men. She liked watching them in the nightclubs, and on

the street. “They are so nimble and clean cut,” her mind whispered to her, as if to take away the pain of the present situation.

“You can always say you are queer,” roared the Woodcutter. “Your accomplice can say the same. Men from the Middle East avoid lesbians like the plague; this is in contrast to the West where men seem to be fascinated by them. It’s all a great game you know Lucy - all a great game.”

“Will they be at Club Picasso tonight?” asked Lucy playing the game.

“We know that Sector Five hang out in Club Picasso, on a Monday and Wednesday; they have also been seen in the Love Hut on a Thursday.” The Woodcutter, as if distracted, looked up from the piece of paper he was now reading from. “You will see their faces on the laptop in front of you in the file titled nightclub rebels. These are the names and faces of the people concerned. Copy them into your e-mail account and keep it handy.”

As Lucy sat down, the Woodcutter slowly handed her three photographs, along with a fact sheet. “Have a look at this too,” he said pushing it towards her. “The first man is a Moroccan man; they call him Romeo. He has been given the code name Tippy-toe, here in the office, for as you will come to discover he tip toes everywhere he goes. Then there is Jimmy Dee; he tells everyone he is from Tripoli, but he is actually from Tunisia. He is a nice chap, a gentleman who likes music. Then there is an American who they call Fathead - well I don’t think I need to say too much about him. Like many others before them, all three are active trying to bring down the western economy."

"Their plan is to destabilise the foundations of western culture. At every opportunity they rubbish western society, its religion and its ethics. Members of Sector Five see it as an economic war. We dealt with this kind of thing during the Race Wars and Great Economic Famine, and we will have none of it now, Lucy. The way they operate is to spread nihilism. They say they are waiting for the day when they will all rise up and defeat the West. I’m sure you are familiar with it. Naturally, they attach themselves to groups who are disillusioned with the way of life here in the West. They have members who pass through the city on their way to other cites in Europe and the Middle East, and they constantly feed instructions to them. It’s your job Lucy to find out what they are up to and to pass the information onto me, the Chief Controller. However, as I have said, you will not be alone.”

Just at that moment, someone knocked on the Controllers door and in came a young man trying not to look awkward. “Goodness me it’s the young man I met in the canteen,” thought Lucy.

"Ah, come in Lex and meet your dancing partner," roared the Chief Controller.

As regards his business profile Lucy Lovelock thought him funny, for he still seemed to be about two steps behind the real world. "If he ever catches up with it he will be everything he wants to be," she thought as she smiled to herself.

At least she could handle him, and as she looked at him she felt it again: that he wanted to be a TV star more than anything else in the world. She reckoned that Lex could not really understand why girls had not loved him in the past, and the remedy for this was of course to become a TV star.

"Are you a good dancer," asked Lucy, as she stood up to shake his hand. Then being honest and forthright she turned to the Chief Controller and added, "We met in the canteen ten minutes ago."

"Splendid!" cried the Woodcutter.

"Rule number one when dealing with the Controllers, "Lucy told herself, "Let the light of truth shine on."

Trying not to overstep the mark, Lex beamed, "Not bad," and nodded at her.

She noticed that the Woodcutter was relaxed, as he monitored their actions. His manner was similar to that of a father when he looks at children, trying to understand the competition between them.

For some reason, Lucy warned herself, "Talk to Lex about street culture, be casual with him, never open, show an interest in music, ask him if he knows the people in the city who run things."

Lucy, as he spoke to her, wondered what he would be like outside the office: "I wonder what fascinates him? What type of friends has he got? Will he change within days, of them meeting, never mind weeks? Once he has found something inside me that he does not like, will he be horrible to me?"

She noticed Lex acting tough, as he listened to the Woodcutter; he kept nodding the way America TV chat show presenters do, waiting for the right moment to speak.

The Woodcutter said gently, "You don't think we are going to send you two on a mission like this without any clothes to wear - do you?"

Lex laughed at the thought of it, and as if to take in the whole universe his big green eyes opened wide. Like an American GI soldier, he replied, "No, sir."

The Woodcutter continued, "You shall be well paid, and nothing will be left to chance. You shall have a bodyguard, although you will not know

who that is. He will stay close to you as you go from club to club in search of information about the underground movement known as Sector Five; others too will follow you around from club to club and detail your every move.

After a pause, the Woodcutter added, "Lucy you will meet Yvonne tonight and go with her. Lex will be there on his own looking for a pickup. There is a special DJ, I believe, on tonight down at Club Picasso. Presently, we will discuss the plan, then you two can have the rest of the day off and prepare for this evening."

The Woodcutter sat back in his Controllers' chair, stretched himself, then added, "Oh, by the way your friends will obviously see a change in your habits. However, since you are working here at the Academy, they will probably gather that you two are seeing each other. Please in no way try to influence their thoughts. You will learn that everything pans out to your advantage, when you work for the Academy of Entertainment, if you leave things well alone."

Lucy was fascinated by the names of the members of Sector Five, and along with Lex she quickly looked down at the photographs of the three men on the table. In her spare time, she loved to look up names in dictionaries, and sometimes in her daytime reveries she tried to trace their origins back to the Garden of Eden, before the fall when everything was good.

Suddenly, Lex burst out, "I know the clubs in the city quite well, but I don't know these characters."

"That's fine, it may be the case that you will know some of their friends. If so, just act normal, nothing has changed."

Lex smiled, as if playing his part in the unbelievable drama, and he repeated slowly to himself, "Yes, just act normal."

Lucy loved to think about prehistoric man and how he wandered about the earth collecting food, sleeping in caves, existing with just the moon and the stars above him - of course no Controllers in the media to control him - just a beautiful wondrous spirit in the air. Realising that she was dreaming, she drifted back into the present, and into the Controllers room.

"We call them the live-alones here at the Academy; they are people who cannot stand living with anyone," said the Woodcutter's voice. "They go to nightclubs, pick up women, or men, use them for their pleasure, then dump them."

Lucy had heard about foreign men who went to nightclubs to pick up women. The thing that impressed her most of all was the way they played

the game with the young women. Western women of course would check them out, but the test she reckoned was always related to what was acceptable in the eyes of the media. Most of the foreign men would go through the test with flying colours. They had observed the TV pundits, presenters and personalities - some of course were better at it than others.

She heard the Woodcutter say, "Culture is like a stream running between people, full of thoughts, images, and visions, and on and on it goes round and round, in a never-ending cycle."

In the hope of picking up the trail of Sector Five, Lucy arranged to meet Yvonne that night in a bar just off Ingram Street called Dexy's. The plan was to have a drink first there, then they would go to Club Picasso in Royal Exchange Square around eleven o'clock. Lex would join them later at Club Picasso.

It had become apparent there was a cultural distance between her and Yvonne; this could be seen in the way they approached life. At first, Lucy thought her gentle and simple, but she felt that this was because she wanted to get to know her, not because it was her nature. This was Lucy's main preoccupation as regards humans: the outside and the inside, how people portrayed themselves, and the hidden agendas in their hearts and minds. She thought about Sunday school, and what she had been taught there:

'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' Mt 10:16.

The great thing about city life, Lucy felt, was that although it swallowed people up, once you knew its rhythm you became anonymous, and you could move around without anyone really noticing you. Lucy enjoyed walking through the town centre before the midnight hour - but never after it for: "That's when the creepy-crawlies come out," she reckoned.

That night, at Dexy's Bar and Diner, the two young Controllers chatted. Lucy said with a twinkle in her eye, "Well, at least we get the morning off tomorrow."

As if terrified by the prospect, Yvonne responded right away, "They say foreign men are hard on western women."

Lucy thought about this. Then she replied in her best academic voice, "I think the problem is that love and romance for them is something to manipulate, while we in the West, on the other hand, still believe it to be something pure not to be sullied by human hands - something predestined possibly?"

The wine seemed to relax them, and they started to enjoy their evening. Although she had brought up the subject of romance Lucy, like most of her generation, believed that the media were trying to kill it off as a human activity. The Controllers had given up on it years ago, before she was born. Thankfully, there were one or two artists around who still valued love and romance as an artistic topic, and you could still buy music and books as regards this over the Internet. Music that was played on the radio and on TV however was corporate music written for corporations by people who wanted to make money from them.

Yvonne laughed at the word romance, as if it were linked to stupidity, "How people from warm climates want to live here in Northland is a mystery to me - it's always raining." Then in her professional Controller's voice, she added: "Don't you think men are all heavy drinkers up here, and once they marry they immediately become manic-depressives. Most now see marriage as a death sentence, and avoid it like the plague."

Yvonne and Lucy had some fun with this, and they both laughed. Feeling in a good mood, Lucy asked Yvonne, "What type of men do you like?"

Yvonne thought for a moment, and as if distracted she glanced towards some men who were standing drinking beside her at the bar. Lucy could see Yvonne was remembering some of the men she had been with, and she too looked at some of the men inside the bar as if trying to understand the opposite sex.

Yvonne suddenly answered, "I like men who are commanding."

This made Lucy laugh, "What are commanding men like?"

"You know they take over everything, and you just follow."

Now knowing what she meant, Lucy asked, "You're not a woman on top, then?"

Yvonne's face came alive as if in the throws of lovemaking, then as it faded she became a little timid again, "Not exactly, I'm not pushy about who is on top, as long as whoever it is, is enjoying the experience," and she giggled like a little girl.

Lucy at that moment wondered about the sex act: men on top, women on top - it was all a great mystery to her.

"Time for another drink," she thought to herself, tearing herself away from the mental sex image.

After she had ordered two glasses of wine she whispered to Yvonne, "You know men don't understand women; they really don't understand them. I mean most men just want to have sex, and once it's over they can go back to their friends and talk about it. A woman wants to know that a

man is hers. She can feel the distance and the space between them as soon as they come together. In fact, as soon as a man walks into a room a woman knows if he will be hers or not. He may be unaware of her even thinking about him, but as soon as a man's eyes are on a woman she knows all about him, and what he is after."

Just at that moment, Lucy thought about Tom Kolanski. In her new Controller's voice she appended, "Yes, a woman's thoughts are always going in the opposite direction, away from a man's. If his thoughts are going out from the earth, then a woman's thoughts are always coming in towards it, forwards and backwards they go like the waves of the sea."

Yvonne laughed, "We had better get to the club, it's getting late."

Lucy, before finishing her drink, thought for a moment, "Right, let's just go over the routine: we have to meet these African men, find out what they are all about, and report back to Mr Grindford."

Yvonne, as she nimbly finished her wine, nervously retorted, "That's it."

Lucy, playing the part of a spy, looked around the bar to see if she had missed anyone, smiled at Yvonne, then they left the pub and walked outside.

Club Picasso, where the so-called Sector Five hung-out, was in Royal Exchange Square. As soon as they approached the club Lucy noticed two pretty girls, in summer party dresses, kissing the two short fat nondescript bouncers in black coats.

Watching the scene: one kiss on the left cheek, then another on the right, Yvonne whispered to Lucy, "A perk of the job."

"No doubt," replied Lucy, then she added, "Well, they have got to get their kisses from somewhere," and the two girls laughed and relaxed as they approached the club.

Club Picasso had been modelled on the famous artist. The dance floor and bar were both downstairs. Not long after they had paid in, a young lad bumped into them at the bottom of the stairs. Lucy noticed he was struggling with a sack full of ice. It was like something out of a Dickens novel, a child labourer hired by an affluent master to keep the drinks cool for the cognoscenti.

She was sure if Tom Kolanski had been there he would have said something to her like: "Time never changes, Moongirl, the common people have to serve the rich."

Lucy wondered if the young lad would make it to the bar without spilling all that ice on the stairs. The strange thing in nightclubs in the twenty-first century Lucy felt was that people had no affiliation with cul-

ture. They were completely aimless. The state had seen to that; the Controllers had turned them into worshipers of whatever there was on Television. TV Images far removed from their daily lives controlled the zombies. How strange was that? They were aliens in their own land, unable to act with any real spontaneity.

Lucy had been to Club Picasso once before with Kolanski; it was a typical nightclub and she knew that it wouldn't really get busy till around midnight. Lucy could see just about everyone in the club as she walked towards the bar. To her left, she noticed three African looking men over at her in the far corner. They were sitting in an alcove. Two of the men she reckoned could have passed for western men, but she could see that the third was African through and through.

"They are over there," Lucy whispered to Yvonne.

Remembering their faces from the photographs, Yvonne quickly looked at them. She said rather anxiously, "Right, what do you want to drink?"

Just then a tired looking trendy young barman, dressed all in black, informed them, "Cocktails are half price tonight, ladies."

"Great," replied Lucy, "I'll have ten," then after pouting her lips she ordered two.

Lucy out of the corner of her eye could see the Arabs were sitting like Quakers in the corner not saying anything to each other. Yvonne, although nervous, seemed more experienced than Lucy at this kind of thing. She suggested, "I think we should move over to the other side of the bar so they can get a good look at us from there."

With a good deal of cynicism in her tone Lucy, trying to match her mood, replied, "Oh, I'm sure they will come onto us as soon as they see us."

Pushing her small, but firm, breasts out, just like she did every morning, Lucy laughed, then she led the way. She could see that at the other side of the bar there was only one person standing there. He was a young man acting strange, tapping his cigarette into an ashtray; however as soon as they got there he moved away. To her left Lucy, although she dare not look, knew the Arabs were there in the corner of the club, 'lurking in the shadows,' as the Woodcutter put it. Lucy and Yvonne in their tight fitting modern clothes smiled at each other, as they took off their jacket coats. Lucy put her jacket over the bar stool and sat on it, and then Yvonne did likewise.

Lex suddenly appeared, "Can I buy you a drink, ladies?" he said acting, as if he did not know them.

Lucy replied like Jenny Penny, "No thanks, honey, see you later," and he disappeared.

There was a crackle from the large speakers inside the club, Lucy looked over at the DJ, someone laughed, then she heard someone shout: "Get me a drink, before I collapse."

It wasn't long till Tippy-toe appeared at the bar beside her. He spoke in a comical foreign accent, "Hey, baby, you dancing tonight."

Lucy nearly burst out laughing when she heard Tippy-toe make the sound of kisses after asking her this. Lucy felt that it was as if he were talking to a dog, or a horse, or a cat, to get its attention.

Hearing no reply he asked her another question: "You come from Northland, yea?"

Quite calmly, as she drank the man inside her, Lucy took up the mantle of the spy, "He is quite good looking, has closed cropped dark hair, possibly dyed. His movements are tactful. He has reasonably intelligent looking eyes. He is in some ways refined yet in other ways crude: like a product of a civil servant and a street vendor."

She could see the foreign man wanted to take Lucy in his arms and whisk her round the dance floor, then carry her off back to his apartment.

"You come with me," she heard him say, and hearing no reply, he added in a gruff voice, "Come on, we dance," and he tugged at her arm.

Lucy pushed him off, "We will dance later," she said annoyed.

Lucy then glanced at the empty dance floor, trying to show him that there was no-one dancing at the moment. The African man studied her face as if trying to understand her soul, then he looked round for his friends who were still sitting in the corner of the night club Picasso. Needless to say, it was not long before Tippy-toe's friends joined him at the bar. The dialogue between the western girls and the eastern boys soon became animated, fractured, and intense. Lucy at times thought it unbelievable, hilarious and funny, and, to stop herself laughing, she had to excuse herself and go to the toilet.

When she came back, Tippy-toe introduced himself again as if they hadn't met before: "My name is Ali. I have been here for many years. My wife is from Northland," he boasted.

"You are married," asked Yvonne.

"Divorced," replied Tippy-toe, in a thick voice.

And as he looked at Yvonne, for the first time Lucy noticed he looked sheepish. The strange thing Lucy thought about him was that he disapproved of one of his friends smoking: "Must be a religious nut," she thought.

Acting as if she had not a care in the world - a favourite Lucy Lovelock trick - Lucy dug a little deeper, "What do you work at?"

"Hairdresser," responded Tippy-toe, post-haste.

"Whereabouts?"

"The west end."

Lucy could see that she would have to report this man back to the Controller with the recommendation that he should be monitored. She knew that the Goon Squad had already taken pictures of them. Lucy remembered also at the Controllers meeting, it had been reported that they were to be followed next week by the secret branch from the Controllers unit. However, this week they wanted just to get a 'street cred' report of them: how they had assimilated themselves into society, what they worked at, what kind of things they liked, etc.

Tippy-toe appeared to Lucy younger than he acted and, although competent in English, there seemed to be two sides two him: soft and hard - like a date.

"Well, isn't this just terrific," thought Lucy, as she took another drink of her cocktail, "You get paid to talk to these characters, better start acting like Mata Hari. God knows what's in his mind."

Thinking up something to say, she sang to Yvonne, "I think we will have to wait all night for them to buy us another drink."

"You come home with me," intoned Tippy-toe.

And as Tippy-toe stared deep into Lucy's blue eyes, she heard a comic voice inside her repeat his monosyllabic tone, "Yes, I will come home with you, tonight. You take me prisoner. We go in the morning back to your country, where I will be your slave for the rest of your life."

As if reading her thoughts, Yvonne looked over at her in horror. With a change of tone, Lucy asked, "Where do you stay?"

"Cowcaddens," answered Tippy-toe, never taking his eyes from hers.

At that moment, Lucy looked away from him and, as she sat at the bar, she stared at the barman. He was playfully throwing some ice at his mate across the way. Quite naturally, she turned to face Tippy-toe again, and she repeated the wonderful phrase her grandmother had taught her, "Sorry, I'm spoken for."

Lucy was glad to see that although the man in front of her had not heard this phrase before, he seemed to understand it. "You like films?" asked Tippy-toe.

He was of course talking about sex films, and she knew it. At that moment, Lucy wondered about the Controllers in the Middle East, and marvelled if they operated in a different manner from the ones in the UK.

"We can go back to mine," said Tippy-toe again. "We watch a film."

Lucy laughed and said. "I've got a meeting tomorrow."

Seeing the foreign man's eyes wander all over Lucy's athletic body, and feeling the situation difficult, Yvonne suggested to Lucy that they take a seat over on the far side. They certainly had enough on them now to make a report out, as regards what they thought their intentions were.

Presently, Lucy and Yvonne lifted their drinks and coats and sat down inside an alcove opposite the bar. The African men duly followed them. When they all sat down, Lucy suddenly became aware of a young thin man with them; he looked scared. He was now sitting opposite her, next to the one the office had named as Tippy-toe. His wonderful expression portrayed that he had just made it over the sea, and had landed in paradise. Lucy wondered what he must have been like before coming over to the West, and how this must have changed him.

She became fascinated by his early life. She imagined him walking in the market place, meeting friends, someone stopping him and saying to him, 'I am just back from the UK, you would not believe the things that go on there: free health care, free women, plenty work.'

Then she imagined the young man somewhere at night watching British TV, and for the first time being controlled by the Controllers, "He has made it across all the frontiers of Europe just to be controlled again," thought Lucy, "I wonder how his thoughts will change now that he is here in the West?"

Lucy looked at Tippy-toe and the strangest thought just then crossed her mind, "Tippy-toe looks as if he is sitting in church with me."

The man obviously didn't want to put a word or movement out of place, lest it spoiled his chances of getting her into bed.

It was a good name she thought for him: "Tippy-toe."

Lucy noticed that sometimes when he got excited he would knock her with his hand on her leg, and when he spoke to her he forgot he was doing this and it got quite sore. Once or twice she had to move her leg away from him. Thankfully, Tippy-toe stopped doing this; he seemed to be elsewhere possibly thinking about her work, and what it must be like to work for a television company. His Eastern mind, as she listened to him fascinated her. She felt that it raced between colours, everything was either good or bad, he did not appear to have a halfway house to stop at and pause, or to get off at. Everything in life for Tippy-toe was either, "Good or shit," as he put it.

They stayed for a few drinks, then after more tugging, laughing, and joking, Yvonne and Lucy left the club. Lucy for some reason thought that

he wanted to kill her for not sleeping with him. She caught him in the club standing just starring at the western women. She tried to understand the frenzy of his eastern thoughts: goggled-eyed, hanging tough, as if not knowing quite why he had been transported into the western world.

He told her that he had had many women. This was a strange thing men coming over to the West to openly plunder the economy and the women; it seemed farfetched like something you read in a novel, and yet it was happening here right in the middle of town in Club Picasso. Tippy-toe had no reservations about entering western women. She reckoned that the spectre of death, never to return, was something different for him.

Lucy felt she would have to act fast and get out of his company before he killed her. She did not know how he was going to do it, but the presence of a dark spirit told her she was right. His almost kind polite words, were mannerly at times, then at other times he was coarse, callous, and uncouth: the classic symptoms of a confused man.

The African men chatted away again in their broken tongues, as they all left the club; Lucy this time avoided the musical drama of the call and response. She did not listen to them. She reckoned that if she went outside the club tonight with Tippy-toe he would probably bundle her into the car, kill her and dump her body somewhere. Didn't he come from a land where death was just a matter of time; it was predestined?

"What was it to Tippy-toe anyway to kill a young bright thing in the West?" she asked herself.

Just then, Lucy caught sight of a bone handle inside his jeans; in days gone by she knew the bouncer would not have missed this. She had to get free; she had to give Tippy-toe the slip before she went outside.

Tippy-toe stared at her as they climbed the stairs. He was trying to hypnotise her; she felt to go with him into the dark night was to enter into his web of death. She could feel a dark spirit behind her.

"You want a lift home?"

"No," stuttered Lucy, "I got to go and visit my friend in town."

"At this hour?"

"She works late in a bar."

His eyes flickered, "I drop you off."

As the music blared from the club Lucy tried to work out the plan to free herself from him. Should she tell the bouncer? Would he believe her?

"Don't get into the car," a voice in her head kept saying.

As they reached the top of the stairs, she quickly said, "Goodbye."

Yvonne and her walked left towards Buchanan Street; no one said anything. When she reached the arch under Royal Exchange Square she

sensed the African man was behind her; she wanted to turn round, but she couldn't. It was like a scene out of Death in Venice, with the beggars hanging around the arch, while the affluent people were going in and out of the clubs and bars. She wondered where Wolfie was at this hour. This was his spot.

"If a policeman comes along I will stop him - that would be daft there are never any policeman out at this time of night."

A young beggar grinned at her; he had been hit in the face and was covered with blood. The saxophone player who played outside the restaurant went over and spoke to him.

"Keep moving; I will try and grab a cab. Why doesn't Yvonne say something?"

She walked down as far as Mitchell Lane, then she started to run, and before she knew it she was half way along the lane. She hoped Yvonne would be all right. She could hear a voice inside her cry, "I'm dead; I'm in a dark lane!"

Suddenly, she looked back and she saw Tippy-toe; he was starring at her just like he had done in the nightclub, looking for sex. She started to run faster and even though she had on sensible shoes - at least her mother would be happy at that - she tripped on the kerb and fell to the ground. The African man must have been fast, for he was on to her in no time at all, and wrestled her to the ground. Lucy felt his big frame on top of her.

She screamed and as he tried to grab her hand, she bit his finger. In the crazy seconds that followed, she heard a rumble from somewhere. It was near the hairdressers salon, whose backdoor was in the lane; a couple had been making love behind the skip. The scream obviously had startled them. She couldn't see the African man anymore. Then she spotted him. Thankfully, he was running away.

In a complete daze, Lucy could still feel his weigh on top of her, even though he was gone. The sense that her body had been temporary extinguished from this world suddenly evaporated, and now she just felt sore all over.

Yvonne came running up the lane to her, she said out of breath, "Are you all right?"

Lucy slowly got to her feet, "I think so."

7

The next day Lucy had the morning off; she had made an appointment with the dentist. The Controllers had everyone's teeth checked out before they started working for them. Lucy felt that it was just like the slave market in olden times. She imagined the owner coming over to her and saying: 'Open your mouth. Yes, I will take this one, Lucy Lovelock. She will do me; send her to my office on Monday.'

The dentist, Mr Smith, had received a report by e-mail from the Controllers' office, and had a plan of action already in place for her. He knew that Lucy had lost one tooth at school in a hockey accident, and for a time had worn a plate.

The last dentist she had gone to had got rid of the plate and built a bridge over the missing tooth, then capped her teeth. Lucy remembered him saying to her then, "Only people on low incomes have plates nowadays."

Mr Smith she hoped one day would grow the tooth back in with the wonderful new technology, she had read about that was on trial up and down the country.

Lucy was now very much on the way up in society, working for the Controllers; her image would need to reflect this with a perfect smile. She knew that from this day on she could never again portray, between the hours of nine and five, the girl in a whirl image. On the whole her caps were fine, but during the night a little blood had come down from the roof of her mouth, and she knew that something was up.

When seeing her enter the small surgical room, the stocky little man in the white coat, behind the dentist chair, cried out, "Right let's be having you, now."

This greeting and his bright eyes made Lucy feel secure; he was not, she felt, one of the children of the evil one.

She had heard about all sorts of legal cases involving mal practice: people suing dentists for all kinds of things. The dentist put something down on a table. Then in a singsong voice, he sang, "Ah, it's the old caps is it! Well, just sit yourself right down here, and we will see what we can do for you."

Lucy, knowing it was a 2-hour appointment, said a little prayer before lying flat on the chair.

"Can you change them without freezing my mouth up?" she said, knowing that after he did this she would not be able to say very much.

"Oh, we can't do that," said the happy dentist. "You would feel some pain, and we can't have you feeling any pain now, can we?"

After a pregnant pause, he sympathetically added, "It won't take long."

Lucy knew that after the jab nothing was going to be sore, so in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion she relaxed, and as her eyes watered, and her mouth went numb, she thought about the man she had met in the club. She had been lucky to escape. And as the dentist happily worked away inside her mouth, she wondered what it would have been like if she had went back to his apartment last night, "The difference between western men and eastern men is that eastern men do not seem to be interested in breasts, as much as their counterparts. The fascination of women must lie somewhere else for them. The eastern rhythm of love is different. If, as they say, life takes place where your mind is, eastern men must always be found in some desert place looking for what is good and what is bad, taking possession of it, then letting go of it..."

"Not sore, now is it?" said the dentist, who looked down into her blue watery eyes.

"No," said Lucy slowly.

Lucy thought about the man chasing after her. Was it in fun? Or did he really want to kill her?

Although, Yvonne had said that he was just being playful, she seemed stunned and hardly said a word in the taxi on the way home. After an impression had been taken, Lucy noticed that any conversation, that she wished to have with the dentist, had been taken away from her: for her mouth was completely numb now.

Lucy feeling tired just drifted here and there in thought and reverie till she found a kind of domestic paradise. Her father was on the beach. It was a sunny and warm day, and a gentle breeze was coming in from the sea. There were not many people on the beach: "Lucy, catch!" and as the huge beach ball came tumbling towards her, she put her hands out to grab it.

"Right let's get these beauties off," sighed the dentist.

The dentist then started drilling at the front of her mouth. Thankfully, after he had got one of the caps off, the others came away no bother at all.

"It's not great, but it's not bad," reported the dentist, as he studied the inside of her mouth.

He could see that the tooth next to the missing tooth had snapped, "It could have been a whole lot better, but then again," sang the happy dentist, "It could have been a whole lot worse."

Lucy asked for a mirror to see her mouth. When she held it up she got the fright of her life, for she had forgotten that when they had been capped her teeth had been filed right down. It looked horrible and her heart sank. She thought about growing old and being loved by no one. She thought about laughing and having no teeth in the front of her mouth. She thought about kissing her dream lover, and him turning away. If she had had a choice she wouldn't have gone for the caps, for Lucy loved everything natural in life. She could not understand people who went in for cosmetic surgery. However, because she had had an accident at school she had little or no choice on the subject. No way would Lucy ever go for breast implants, or go for a nose job, lyposuction, or anything like that, but because the caps had got rid of the plate she had gone for them.

Lucy, after everything was finished, got off the dentist chair and got ready to go back to the Controllers office in town. She had to go back and see the dentist in two weeks time. His last instruction to her was, "Now don't eat any packet curries: for the colouring on the temporary caps will stain, and you will look a real honey," then he laughed.

8

She was so hungry by the time she got to the Academy of Entertainment that Lucy headed straight for the canteen. And our Lucy still feeling tired, hardly thinking, ordered chicken with rice; it was only when she went to the toilet to brush her hair in the mirror that she noticed what she had done. When she smiled at herself in the mirror she nearly fainted, for her teeth were bright yellow. The chicken had been cooked in a curry sauce.

The office in the afternoon was subdued due to the news from the Controllers in America that they were ready to invade Korea. So this is war thought Lucy. The threat of someone hurling an atomic bomb at you seemed unreal, and yet the fear it provoked was immense; if the Koreans had it they may just do that. She knew that all news bulletins from now on would be about the nuclear threat in the East. The memo on her computer as she logged on said: 'Special Meeting at 4.15, today, Room 704.'

At precisely 4.15, the Woodcutter bombed into room 704, crying, "Everyone here! Good!" and the meeting began right away.

Lucy sat in the same seat as she had before. She noticed that Mr Grindford seemed under extreme pressure, and no wonder for the West was just about to go to war in the East, and the ratings for his TV station were still plummeting, as regards viewing figures.

Word had got through to the Controllers that all Sector 5 members, as they were known, were about to launch an attack soon; they needed more information about what was happening on the ground. Lucy had to go to Club Picasso again tonight and find out everything she could. Apparently, every radical fringe group was ready to join in the fray. Any information would be useful. Destabilising the country was a real possibility; peo-

ple were spreading rumours and lies, agent provocateurs seemed to be everywhere.

The Woodcutter warned them, "The rumours will have to be countered! We will be running special programmes, and sending our people out into the streets."

Lucy wondered about how to keep away from the foreigners, but at the same time get as much information out of them as possible. She had heard about Mossad agents sleeping with people just to get information, but she wasn't in the Secret Service thank goodness, she was working for the Controllers' Office at the Academy of Entertainment and, because of the grave situation, she had been asked to do certain things for her country.

"Well, fair enough I guess, but I don't remember seeing anything about this though in the contract of employment," she thought to herself.

As the meeting broke up, Yvonne smiled over at Lucy telling her that she was looking forward to seeing her again tonight. After a sigh, Yvonne said sheepishly, "Well, let's just see what happens."

Late in the afternoon, Lucy went shopping in the city centre; she wanted to buy herself a writing desk so that she could put her laptop on it beside her bed. She liked the idea of an old-fashioned writing desk, something different to look at. After going here and there to some of the upmarket shops, Lucy walked along to the superstore in the middle of town where she knew they sold pre-pack furniture. Flicking through the brochure, at the counter inside the store, she spotted just what she wanted: A Beautiful Old-fashioned Writing Desk, 'With Wheels on it!' said the heading. 'You Can Take it Anywhere You Want To.'

"This is ideal," thought Lucy. "I can bring it into the bedroom at night, and if one day I buy a flat of my own I can wheel it about from room to room."

Lucy wanted to move out of her mother's home, but she knew the time was not right yet. She wanted to meet a man, fall in love, and get married; she did not want to live on her own, or share a flat with someone.

At the counter inside the superstore she spoke to the fresh faced assistant. The attractive young girl she noticed looked blissfully unaware of the evil world that was about to go to war outside her window. Lucy showed her the picture of the writing desk in the catalogue. The young lady kindly filled in the blue form for her. Then she told her to go to the waiting area, "They will call your number," she said in a polite voice to Lucy.

It was quite cheap £30, and that meant more savings in the bank for the flat she wanted to buy. A few moments latter, Lucy lifted the pre-pact

writing desk up and smartly walked out of the store with it under her arm. However, as soon as she got to the door she thought her arms were going to hit the concrete pavement. She had to put it down immediately - the car park was miles away too.

"This is the point where the handsome stranger comes along and says, "Can I help you, Miss?"

Like magic a very attractive young man approached, and as he got near to her she noticed that he was smiling at her. However, instead of saying the above words he just walked on by.

"It's the twenty-first century," thought Lucy, "Not 1920."

Taking no chances she would stumble into the path of the next sane looking man going in the direction of the car park, and ask him to help her. The car park she could see was about half a mile away. Out of the blue a man appeared, passing by the store, and immediately Lucy stopped him. She quickly said, "Can you help me, sir?"

On closer inspection he seemed to her a foreign man. Lucy could see he didn't really understand English all that well. She wondered what he was doing in Northland. Thankfully, as they stood looking at each other his face came alive, "Ah," he grinned, as he looked down at the cardboard box. Then in one clean swoop he had it under his arm. "We go this way."

"Yes, we go this way."

As she hobbled along beside him in the busy afternoon street, Lucy made conversation with the friendly man; first about her work, then about the worsening Korean situation. She kept saying to him, "Surely they won't launch a missile strike on the USA or Britain."

However, the man said nothing, he seemed not to understand. Mercifully, they soon got to the car park, and the man went all the way up with her to the top floor. Lucy opened the boot of her jeep, and he placed the pre-pack safely inside it. Lucy wanted to give him some money for his trouble, but this had always been frowned upon by her grandmother. Her grandmother, whom she respected as regards the world and how to deal with it, had once told her, "Lucy, never give money to strangers for helping you - remember you're a woman."

This seemed an odd thing to say in the twenty-first century, for it had romance attached to it, but Lucy liked it. Her gran had a way with words. She spoke at times as if quoting from the book of Isaiah. "If a man wants to help you, he will walk over broken glass to come to you," was what her gran usually added.

Lucy smiled, then made a little speech: "Oh, that was very kind of you indeed, thank you ever so much. I don't know what I would have done on my own - the thing weighed a ton."

Feeling that he did not understand the words, only the sentiment, she shook his hand before saying, "Goodbye," then he went away.

When she got home she could see that her mother was out. However, all the house lights were on. The timer must have been set wrongly again. She knew that no doubt she would have to switch the heating off too when she got inside. Instead of carrying the lightweight pack into the house from the garage, Lucy decided to cut the straps off it there and then, and carry it into the house piece by piece.

Presently, she got a pair of tiny scissors out of her bag and, although feeling tired and exhausted, she looked forward to assembling the old-fashioned writing desk. She noticed there was tape over the straps. Lucy got annoyed, for after she had cut one strap she noticed there was another one strap underneath it, and when it would not cut she made a stab at it. Unfortunately, she missed it and she stabbed her left hand, just below her thumb. Lucy screamed as the blood came bubbling out down over her hand. Wondering what else could go wrong today, she went straight into the house and searched for some plasters.

"Just like the thing, where has mum put them?"

Tired and weary, Lucy just stood there in the middle of the room. Suddenly, she thought about the woman who had just moved in across the road from her. She remembered her mother saying that she was a nurse. Thankfully her car was still outside her house.

"Oh, what's been happening to you," cried her neighbour, seeing the patient at the door.

Lucy noticed that for some reason her neighbour's face suddenly came alive at the sight of blood. The neighbour then immediately flew inside, promising her, "I'll soon get you fixed up."

Lucy didn't want to drip blood all over her new carpet, so she stayed at that door till the woman came back with a padded bandage, scissors and tape. With a strange smile on her face, the local nurse, as she dabbed it with cotton wool, told her, "Better go and get it stitched dear - just in case."

The hospital she knew was a good distance away. However, after giving it some thought, tired and worn out, Lucy wandered off to get the wound sealed up. She had got her tetanus jag just last week: one of the recommendations from the Academy of Entertainment. As she took the jeep out of the garage to go to the hospital, Lucy thought to herself, "Isn't life just full of surprises."

Lucy Lovelock was the type of girl who would not be sidetracked in any way. If it was in her mind to place her laptop on the table, then it had to be done. She wanted change immediately. She was impulsive to the point that she believed that not doing things right away harboured up disappointments, and she reckoned that negative images were the devil's allies, and that disappointments in life could bring her to her knees. Lucy would have very few regrets in life. Everything of importance had to take place that minute, that second, if of course it was in her command to do so - she wasn't that daft. If tonight she wanted to see the laptop computer on top of the old-fashioned writing desk, then it had to be done.

After many false stops and starts, matching the coloured lights to this or that bit of wood, Lucy had the cabinet up on its feet, and this was done with only really one good hand too. Just then, she remembered, "Oh, I've still to put the wheels on it."

Methodically, she placed all the items she needed on top of the old fashioned writing desk: books, CD ROM's and speakers to amplify the sound. When she placed her laptop on the cabinet suddenly she heard a crack. Lucy had to catch the laptop as it flew off the desk. When she looked down she noticed that the casters had snapped, the weight of the desk had been too much for it - it would have to go back to the superstore.

Lucy started to cry, "Not been a good day," she sobbed.

Lucy fell onto her bed and thought about her old friends how they used to drop into see her in the afternoon; she was so happy then. She put on some music on the CD player, and lay down with her face against her favourite pink pillow. She snuggled up like she always did when she went for a catnap. Lucy thought about writing something down, maybe this would rescue her from this tired and lonely state. Then she thought about smiling back at the man in the street she passed by in town. She had only seen him once, that was after she had tripped going by him. It was a boy's smile, but that's what made him attractive to her. The music that played seemed so far away, as if coming from another room. She imagined herself dancing with her friend Jenny Penny, like they used to when she came round. Lucy started humming the song to herself, and as if in a dream she fell fast asleep.

9

Lucy got up early the next morning, for she had to be at the office for eight am; there was to be a training session on: How to Control Public Opinion. Her hand was still sore; she could see it was now badly bruised. After she had washed herself, she stood naked in front of the mirror. She again thought about freedom and the magical spirit there inside her body. She could have stood there for hours thinking about this; it was such a wonderful topic to ponder over.

"Lucy are you ready yet!" shouted her mother from downstairs. "I want into the loo!"

At the meeting, the Woodcutter, for pure effect, looked at the new start Lucy Lovelock. Then he said in his usual bombastic way, "Well, today we are going to learn how to control the minds of millions."

"We always start here at the Academy of Entertainment with presentation. Breaking news, and current affairs, must be presented in the right way - no matter if the story is true, or false. That's right, the subject matter must always be presented in the right manner. It must have the signature on it of the Academy. This is the sign that says it comes from a reliable source: someone from within the government, or a source close by. Here at the Academy of Entertainment we do things in a certain way; the public know this. The public can sense what is coming. At the Academy, we have a way of presenting news and current affairs with biblical truth; the things we broadcast here may be true or untrue - that is not important. The majority of the public will believe whatever we say when the stamp of the official seal is on it. The public will always respond to this."

Lucy thought to herself, "So that is why people stare at the TV for so long; they think that it is a prophet, someone from God that is speaking to them."

"If you think about it this way in life we are all consuming the same product, then you will start to understand the importance of TV presentation. Take for example politics: you can put two factions against each other, and let the viewers make up their own minds who is right, and who is wrong. You must take everything to its extreme: for an extreme view will catch the viewer's attention. You will have also noticed that our presenters say things like: 'Quite unique. There has never been anything like it before. Unprecedented. We have not been here before.' We use these sayings a lot here at the Academy of Entertainment."

Lucy countered in her mind, "The secret is never to make a judgement, about anything related to TV, at all times think about something in life. Say to yourself no image on TV is real. It may very well be true: a bomb exploding in a foreign capital, but to me it is not real, and the image will just fade away..."

At that moment, all the faces looked at Mr Grindford; he had stopped speaking. He seemed worried as he walked around the room; for some reason his jovial side had disappeared. He looked serious now. Lucy thought about how she looked, she didn't want to put her death mask on just yet. She felt that as the Woodcutter was walking around the room, he was searching for something in the air. She felt that if at that moment she retreated he would have guessed something was up. Lucy would continue to listen attentively to the propaganda. She would appear to listen to his every word. "The devil's words can go in one ear, and out the other," she laughed to herself. "They are for the common heard to chew over - not me."

Back came the Chief Controllers voice: "The Controllers must instruct the filmmakers and directors as regards presentation. The programme must fit into the spirit of the time. Yes, colour is important. When it was a black and white world, the Controllers during that time then had to portray their programmes in black and white. When colour came on the scene the Corporation, as it was known then, had to change its presentation: programmes from then on were jazzier, more extraordinary, more unreal, if I can put it that way."

"Yes, you can put it that way," thought Lucy to herself.

Ms Quickdrip looked over at her that moment; her eyes fixed upon Lucy's face.

"Any questions?" roared the Woodcutter.

Yvonne thought she had better say something, "Mr Grindford what happens if the director puts too much of his own slant on it, and strays outside the Academy framework? For example, if he quotes some unknown sources, and this comes across as unsettling material?"

"He does not get any more contracts," was the quick retort.

Little Hirohito, bursting to get in on the act, interjected: "The best way to imprint an image in their minds, I feel, is to repeat it, repeat it, repeat it. The Japanese were great at doing this. The message will soon get through."

Lucy listened to the debate, then she thought up a question of her own: "How do you deal with the new phenomenon: people who turn off the volume and only look at the screen for aesthetic pleasure?"

The Woodcutter stopped walking and stared at her intensely. Then he slowly replied, "Yes, I have heard that this new generation see TV as an evil thing; I have even heard that some of them will not watch TV at all."

The Woodcutter paused, "Not Good, Lucy! Not good at all!" then he made up a joke: "This could be another special assignment for Lucy Lovelock! Yes, we need to find out how to get our pictures into their heads again, along with the words of our commentators. Remember something inside the human reacts to the image outside of it - images produce different reactions inside different people. What we have got to find is the common ground. Once we have found this - we are on our way to controlling the public again."

In a strange way, Ms Quickdrip looked again at Lucy. Lucy felt as if she was wondering about her in a worldly way. Lucy knew that every generation threw out the last generation's ideas, so hopefully, if any sympathies did surface within her, she would not be looked upon as a rebel but just someone going along with the new generation.

"We must win them back Lucy. We must get them back onto the sofas and chairs so that we can fill their minds with the images we want. The young, like the old, must be controlled."

"Not likely," thought, Lucy, "The young generation no better than to take in TV 24 hours a day."

When things became really oppressive, Lucy daydreamed faraway from the reach of the Controller's hand. She thought about the man who had stopped her on the street, and asked her if she was free for a drink at lunchtime. He seemed nice. Why didn't she say yes - nothing to lose? If she saw him again she would smile and await his reaction. She did not want to adopt the bitch philosophy like the TV stars. She wondered about Kolanski playing drums at night in his attic bedroom. He was always telling her

about the different beats and rhythms that he could get from his drum kit. One time, he had even got a hold of a conga drum; it was African in origin. In fact, she remembered him playing it down the phone to her, saying, "MoonGirl, if you listen carefully to the rhythm you will hear me calling to you. I love you. Don't throw me aside like an old coat, come round and see me tonight..."

"EarthMan is up to all the tricks," thought, Lucy, "Just like this chap here, the Woodcutter, who is walking around the room."

"Yes, it is time to go back to basics, as soon as you put a camera in front of someone's face they will start to act in a TV manner - God bless them. They will do this of course not for the good in society, but for celebrity status. And for those who try hard enough, we shall give them plenty of airtime. Please remember that ninety-nine times out of a hundred they will not be acting themselves, they will be thinking of some TV idol."

The Woodcutter roared with laugher after saying this, and everyone in the room including Lucy looked at each other trying to figure out the joke. Lucy may have looked at the others, but she knew that the joke - if that was what it was - had gone over their heads: for he was right, they were only acting out characters who had been already conditioned by the Controllers. "TV People naturally want to protect themselves from the world. They are only acting to protect themselves. They mimic the moves of their favourite two-dimensional idols; they always play to the camera, move quickly, talk in extremes, wear colourful designer clothes. In essence they are afraid of not being controlled by the Controllers."

Lucy reckoned the Controller, Mr Grindford, knew this, and that it was his job to keep them acting always towards the camera and into his control. Charlie Chaplin was right Lucy felt: "They have spoiled the oldest art in the world - the art of pantomime - when they added sound to vision. They ruined the great beauty of silence. Sound defeated silence when it was synced to the visual image on the screen."

The one thing Lucy loved to do when she could not sleep was surf the net on her laptop. She had once made a web site at college. "I wonder if it is still up there on the web?" she wondered to herself, as she sat at the Controllers meeting.

She thought about placing her laptop on top on her bed at night and lying there surfing away quite the thing. She had met a French girl named Celine on the net, and she liked her. They had actually met when Celine came to Glasgow, on a student's course. As the Woodcutter rambled on and on, Lucy remembered her last e-mail: *Dear Lucy, I'm off to London in two*

weeks. I have to meet some Italian friends. Should be fun. Please write and tell me when I should visit you again, and of course what I should read. Hate TV!

Lucy would write back soon and wish her good luck; she would recommend the book *Women in Love,* to her, by D H Lawrence. To keep her imagination going, she thought about smelling the new Joy perfume that she had bought just last week.

Lucy late that afternoon went down to visit her grandfather, he had been put in a home for respite. He was not well, "Coughing and spluttering all the time," her gran had said on the phone.

When she got there she found him talking to the nurse. Apparently, the television in his room was broken, and it had been taken away. When he saw Lucy walk into his room the Old Moth's eyes opened wide, and he croaked, "I wondered when you were coming."

The nurse sitting beside him looked up at Lucy and smiled, "We have got him for two weeks."

When the nurse left the room, Lucy cuddled the Old Moth, "Your looking well," she said kindly.

The Old Moth, quick as ever to respond, answered back, "You think so."

Lucy spoke to him about how he had to mix in with the other residents, "You have not to be lonely. Whenever you want something just you let the nurse know, you hear."

Sometimes when she looked at her grandfather, Lucy could see the child in him. He had a boy's face now. It was wonderful how he could look life in the face again and be innocent. He could laugh and smile, and not worry about what the world thought about him.

The Old Moth, with his arthritic hand, gently tapped her hand and said again, "Nice to see you," he repeated when the conversation fell silent.

Lucy checked that all his things had been unpacked, like her mother had said she had to. Then she looked inside his purse that her grandmother had given to him, to see if he had enough money to buy a paper every morning.

Lucy thought she had better scribble his name on the purse just in case he lost it when he went to the games room or to the toilet. "Going to the games room to watch the football tonight, "Lucy asked him.

The Old Moth nodded, "Think so."

She took him for a cup of tea and there in the canteen they met a resident of the home in an electric wheelchair. The old soldier, as the Old Moth called him, was merry, fat, and short. The others however, sitting

here and there in the canteen, were all lost in space; no expression on their faces, just long stares as if everything was too faraway for them to focus on.

The Old Moth in his wheelchair nodded to her once or twice, as she looked at the inmates, then he talked to the old soldier in the electric wheelchair. The man had been in the Middle East, and he loved talking about the women he had met there. The colours from his words, Lucy thought, were like the whiskey he liked to drink at night when he went to the games room.

The man showed Lucy one or two bullet wounds in his hands where he had been shot. Lucy thought him funny and wondered what he must have been like as a soldier: for he didn't seem the type. After they had a cup of tea, Lucy took the Old Moth back to his room, saying to him as she pushed him along, "We will see if they have got the telly fixed..."

10

Even though it was Saturday, Lucy's day off, a message was left on her answer machine. Right away, she recognised the surreptitious voice of Ms Quickdrip: "Lucy, Mr Grindford has asked me to call you; he would like you to go into town again this afternoon, and see what the feeling is like among the Sector Five members. We know from reports they congregate at weekends at a café bar inside the main shopping mall, next to St Enoch Centre. Yvonne won't make it today. She is going to London, with Lex, on another case. You will have to go it alone, I'm afraid. Please report any happenings back to the Controller's office, and of course the feelings amongst the foreign men whom you meet."

Lucy did not know what to think, so she said what she always said when in a quandary, "Fine, fine."

Goodness me thought Lucy: "Whatever is happening. Oh well, I will pop into town around three o'clock, buy myself a nice coffee and see what is going on with the Sector Five members."

On the way into town, she noticed a young woman a few years older than Lucy was sitting in the front seat of the bus; her children were jumping around all over the place. The young mother had got off to a bad start. She was telling the woman behind her, "The driver made me pay for all of them. I thought all children got on free, nowadays."

Just then, a boy came on and stood near to where the young mother sat. Immediately the bus driver popped his head out of the window and shouted: "Someone will have to pay for the boy!"

"He is not mine!" shouted back the angry young mother.

"That's fine," replied the driver, who immediately popped his head back out of the cockpit, "But someone will have to cough up for him, or we are not moving."

Just like the thing, one of the young mother's kids threw up over the others, and the young mother had to appeal to the passengers for some hankies to clean it up. Lucy didn't have any, but another woman sitting beside her thankfully did, and the tissues were duly passed down to the young mother. Lucy felt very strange for she had detected a feeling from some of the passengers of contempt for the young mother: it was as if the young mother was to blame for the hold up. As she looked at the faces around her on the bus, Lucy felt that some of them were in fear of catching some kind of social disease from the young mother and her family. Not that was the kind of feeling that Lucy paid much attention to, but it did annoy her. Lucy's heart, as she sat there, went out to the young mother and her two children.

At that moment, one of the children started to dance about, while the other tried to hit out. As she looked over at Lucy, the young mother tried as best she could to reassure her children: "Now, now, you'll be all right, your clothes will be cleaned when you get home."

Lucy could see the young mother had got herself into an excitable state, and with the whole bus looking at her she was now trying to play down those heightened feelings that ran inside her. An elderly man with a hard face however had no sympathy for her. He mocked the young mother, "Should have their father with them."

Unfortunately, just then the child who was jumping about banged its head off the rail and started screaming. At the terminus the bus stopped to change drivers, and while they were waiting, Lucy fell into her usual kind of daydream state. It was always the same reverie: going away with a lover on a long train journey. "Let's take a train ride, together, and just go, go, go..."

Suddenly, there was a scream as a car screeched to a halt, then there was a thud. Right away all the passengers stood up; there were sighs and groans here and there from inside the bus from some of the passengers. Lucy looked out of the right-hand window, and when she stood up she saw a man getting up from the road; he was hobbling. The man looked a rough and ready type, possibly a labourer. He had just been hit by a passing car. Everyone sat back down. The accident brought a sense of realism into the bus, and it seemed to waken everyone up. Moments later a new driver appeared, and the bus made its way into town.

Most of the people got off at the main stop opposite Central Station, in the city centre of Glasgow. Lucy watched as they got off one by one, then she got up. Just before alighting she asked the diver: "Was the man all right?"

The driver looked at her as if he wasn't too sure what she had just said. After a second or two he responded to the primitive idea of someone caring about someone else, "Yea, he seemed to be all right; he was hobbling about when we left."

As she walked on, out the corner of her eye, she spotted a demonstration against the war in the East. She could see that it was going right through the middle of town, and it was holding up the traffic. People were protesting about the war abroad. "Not in our name was the slogan," they chanted.

Peace in the face of war was having a curious effect on people she could see on the street. Lucy thought. "Some people seemed happy to leave the tyrant in power to pursue his aims; yet on the other hand war brings peace."

The thought of war was having a strange effect on Lucy too: "It makes you fall one way or another; you have to declare your hand. There is no sitting on the fence. You are either for it or against it."

A young man standing not far from the bus stop was arguing with another man about this. The older man Lucy could see was pummelled with drink. He looked a street fighter; his nose had been flattened by a bottle or a punch. Some others near the bus stop started to argue with each other. The tension from the street had got to them. Thankfully, it didn't come to anything, and everyone watched the peace protesters go by.

Lucy, as the protesters marched past, felt that they were mainly young, foreign and left wing students. Just then, she spotted a girl from the library. Lucy called her the Big Girl in the Red Dress. She had her usual comical look on her face. The Big Girl in the Red Dress was dancing wildly right in front of the band to the salsa beat behind her. As she swayed, she seemed to be looking for her friends on the pavement.

Lucy did not know her; she had often wondered what she did for a living. At the library, she was always on the Internet. Lucy reckoned she was trying to meet people to arrange sex parties in the afternoon. They were all the rage these days. The Big Girl in the Red Dress, as she called her, was always staring at the computer screen. She had a comical look on her face, no matter her expression. Lucy thought she could tell when she had got a connection. She was Indian or Pakistani, or from around those parts, a happy go lucky type, up for anything. And here she was today

dancing in front of the Stop The War Demonstration in the middle of the city centre. Not far behind her was another character who went to the library in town. You could not miss him. Lucy recognised him right away: for he had lots of earrings through his nose and ears. Today he was dressed up as a fairy. "Well," thought Lucy," you never know."

As the demo past by, she read the banners, then she watched the Big Girl in the Red Dress again shake her big overweight frame to the whistles and drums of the salsa beat. Lucy knew that she had to keep moving along herself. She had to see if she could find the Africans that she had met in the club the other night. "There has always been war in the world somewhere," thought Lucy, as she tried to chase away the evil image.

As luck would have it, they were not there at their usual table in the cafe inside the precinct, so Lucy walked round the city centre and went into a few shops. Then she walked back to the bus-stop, past the foreigners, who hung around outside central station, and there she jumped on a number 44A bus.

When she got home she had a cup of tea, and relaxed by lying on top of her bed. Sometimes Lucy just hated the world, the lonely spaces between her and her destiny. She called it the famine land: for there was nothing there; no friends, no husband, no wife, no sister, no brother, no uncle, no aunt, no grandfather, or mother, just a huge void: a wasteland. She thought about all the nameless faces she had passed by in the city centre today, and this made her sad: "Like leaves being blown about, people just drifting here and there, one or two good times, then we drift again..."

11

The next day in the office, Lucy was working away quite the thing when suddenly her mobile phone rang. She had been processing ideas on the computer for over an hour now, as regards the launch of the new chat show. Things seemed to be going well.

The Woodcutter's voice came over all strong and clear: "Lucy my dear, would you like to meet me tonight for a meal; I have some interesting developments on the table as regards the launch of our new TV channel. I would like your thoughts on the venture. I always feel it is a good idea to get away from the office and talk about these kinds of things. After he gets back from London, Lex will be coming along too - say 7.30, at the Malmaison restaurant in the city centre."

"Very good," Mr Grindford said Lucy quietly.

Mr Grindford signed off in his usual authoritative way. "See you then, Ms Lovelock."

When she put the phone down, Lucy wondered if the philosophy of the corporation was changing. She may have only been there a couple of days, but she detected something in the air. She would have to think deeply about this so as to keep her soul free from the Controller's grip. She knew that whenever they tried to change their presentation, she would have to react to it.

The Malmaison had once been inside the Central Station in Glasgow. In fact, her great grandmother had apparently worked there as a waitress in its heyday. Now the restaurant was situated inside an old church in West George Street in the city centre. As invited to do, at 7.25 that evening, Lucy walked inside the old church building, over a royal blue car-

pet, and up to the reception area. She enquired at the desk where the restaurant was, and after being given the instructions she then walked downstairs to where it was situated.

Suddenly, a voice shouted from the crowded restaurant, "Lucy!"

Lucy noticed the Woodcutter waving to her from the middle of the restaurant. His face she noticed was even redder than it was when he was in the office. She could see he had been drinking. As if diving for cover, she sat down opposite him. The Pencil man was there, although for some reason as she sat down, he got up ready to go.

The Pencil man wiped his mouth with a large white napkin and said softly, "Got to go back to the office, Lucy, and check the programmes for tomorrow," then he departed.

Lucy hoped that Lex would appear soon.

"Something to Drink!" sang the Chief Controller.

Lucy could see he was acting as if he had all the lads from the office around him. Suddenly, a waiter appeared. Lucy said coolly "A Perrier water please."

"Oh, come come, Ms Lovelock, we can't have that. Have some wine? They have beautiful wine here."

Thinking that she would take the car out when she got home and go for a midnight drive with Jenny Penny, Lucy just smiled, and said quickly, "I'm going to be driving later on, Mr Grindford."

Obviously thinking that she had her car with her, the Woodcutter replied, "Oh, don't worry, I'll get you a taxi."

Wondering what she was doing here with her boss in a restaurant in the middle of town, Lucy made light conversation about the traffic at this time of the night in the city centre. She finished up by saying, "It's getting so dangerous, you know."

And as she struggled with the pleasant surroundings and her forlorn thoughts, Lucy detected for the first time a desperate feeling coming from the Woodcutter. It was as if he was fighting against time; he seemed relaxed, but time was against him. This was a curious thing to understand. "This must only happen when someone is given an insight into their destiny," thought Lucy. "His life has not been a happy one. He has reached his peak a long time ago; now he is fighting against his body and his mind. He sees life now as meaningless, boring, a defunct thing. What makes him happy is controlling others."

Changing the subject, the Woodcutter murmured, "I would like you to keep your eye on Yvonne," he paused, took a drink of wine, before

adding, "She has been upset recently; she is very emotional, you know. She doesn't know how to control her feelings, she gets hurt easily."

Lucy knew Yvonne had been married and it had not worked out. In fact, she had seen a man with her at the front counter that morning at the Academy. He seemed a rough and ready type - well that was her first impression anyway.

"Life is a hard thing, Ms Lovelock, invariably it turns out all right, but there is a rite of passage that we must go through to get there to the promise land," ejaculated the Woodcutter.

This statement frightened Lucy, she wondered what he had in store for her in the way of 'rite of passage.' She certainly would not work her passage - that was for sure, nor would she do anything against her will; as far as she was concerned the rite of passage in life was a significant event. For Lucy Lovelock it had nothing to do with entering a game show, or appearing on any TV programme. Crawling up the ladder by making yourself popular inside the Academy of Entertainment was not for Lucy Lovelock.

Out of the blue, the Controller sang, "I want you and Lex to take charge of Scream TV, our new show. The idea is a chat show with the great and good on it; anyone who wants to parade themselves in front of the nation will get a chance to do so. The idea is to get people into the studio and talk about their friends. What they are really like? Who they are sleeping with? What they are up to? You know the sort of thing. You will have to find two young presenters..."

At this point, the Woodcutter looked around him and said, "Lex should be along any minute."

Lucy immediately thought of meeting the producers and sitting down with them and going through the schedule. She asked a question: "What time is it to be shown at?"

"Oh, around 4pm, it's mainly for the brew walas and the millions of OAP's, who have nothing to do in the afternoon. We have got to keep them active, Lucy, can't have them staring in to space."

Lucy acted as if she was staring at the image of a television screen inside her head, "Yes," she replied.

As if sensing her mood, the Woodcutter smiled at her and, then in a familiar gesture, he wiped some sweat from his brow. After this he searched for more clues as regards the young lady sitting opposite him. He asked softly, "Seeing anyone at the moment, Lucy?"

"Who me?" said Lucy, and she immediately thought of Tom Kolanski.

"He is at university," she countered.

"You like football Lucy."

"Goodness me," thought Lucy, "What next."

"No, I don't go for that much. I sometimes read about the players from time to time, and what they have been up to. They are always being thrown out of nightclubs, and divorcing their wives."

The Woodcutter liked the bitchy comment, "Yes, that's good," cried the Woodcutter, "Where would we be without those wonderful uneducated louts?" then he yawned, "They attract millions of viewers, though. "Then after staring at her, he added slowly, "You like the arts; I remember you saying that at the interview."

Lucy wondered to herself if she did say that at the interview, "The Woodcutter was not present; he must have been listening from an other room."

In fact, when she thought about it, he seemed active all the time: "I bet he has put secret cameras and microphones in the loo."

Better late than never, a boyish figure came through the restaurant. When he got to their table, Lex kept nodding and repeating to himself: "Oh God, I need to get a new car."

Just then, a waiter with shoulder length hair walked by and looked at Lex. Lucy thought she knew him, "But where from?" she quickly asked herself.

Likewise, the waiter turned round and looked at her and smiled, then walked towards the kitchen on the far side of the Restaurant. After he had pushed the little swing doors open he disappeared inside.

A few moments later, she heard someone shout from the kitchen, "Hurry up. We haven't got all day!"

As the swing doors bounced back and forward, Lucy looked down at the plate in front of her, then up at the Woodcutter's face. She noticed the Controller's black diary open on the table in front of him; he must have been thinking about noting something down.

"Yes, of course," thought Lucy, "that's the man who showed me the sign from the bus: BEWARE OF THE CONTROLLERS.

She fell silent, but she felt her face come alive, so as not to give herself away, she sang in a sweet happy voice, "Oh, Matisse is my favourite painter - his colours are just simply out of this world."

The Controller slowly lifted up the small thin pencil beside his diary, and before he noted something down, he asked her, "Do you paint Lucy?"

"I do," she replied quickly, then to kill her nerves she made up a joke, "No exhibitions on at the moment, though."

Mr Grindford she could see had detected the excitement in her voice. The Woodcutter kept the conversation going by saying, "Yes, there is nothing better than going to an art gallery. You know, even though I've been to all the major galleries in the world, I always enjoy going back to them."

"I need to speak with that young man when it is quiet. I will ask him why he showed me the sign: BEWARE OF THE CONTROLLERS."

Mr Grindford, as he put down his wine glass, changed the subject, "So Lucy, how are you enjoying the Academy of Entertainment?"

Lucy immediately switched into employee 565 mode: "Yes, I am enjoying it very much, thank you, Mr Grindford - still feeling my way though in lots of things. However, in a few weeks time, I believe I will be able to do everything on my own."

The sweet was strawberries and cream, then after that came coffee and more chat about the new TV programme. However, for Lucy the evening was as good as over as an enjoyable social event a long time ago. To keep sane in an unnatural environment, Lucy started writing down sentences in her head: "If your natural instincts do not respond, then let whatever it is that is bothering you just simply fade away."

She was aware now that most sentiments from her colleagues at work, even from some of her friends, were based on false premises. These had to be thrown out: for they had come from the Controller's office. People she noticed who were under the Controllers' spell told stories about their lives, as if it had been part of a film or TV documentary. When Lucy felt this coming on, she countered it directly; she ignored the malignant controlling element, and responded only to the natural events around her in time and space. She knew she had to take care of herself: for the Controllers were after her mind and soul.

Out of the blue, the Woodcutter invited then both back to his apartment. He boasted, "I have a small apartment in the city centre; I sometimes use it from time to time for meetings when things get hectic."

Lucy was not sure how to respond so she just looked at Lex. Lex by this time had had too much to drink; he could not respond to anything other than vague ideas. The Chief Controller added in a gruff voice: "Don't worry Lex, dear boy, you can leave the car here and pick it up in the morning - no problem. I want you and Lucy to come back to my apartment, so that we can finalise things there."

Lucy thought this a good time to seek out the waiter. She hoped that when she got back to the table the proposal would have evaporated into thin air, and she could go home. She excused herself and went to the toilet.

However, as she walked through the restaurant she felt a voice deep inside her say, "Lucy, you have got to go or else you will fall into the bad books."

A feeling not to get involved however was the dominant feeling in her mind. To take her mind off things, she said to herself, "I will write a note to the waiter, and see if he will meet me next week."

Presently, she went to the toilet and there she scribbled the following note on a piece of paper that she found in the waste paper basket nearby: *Hi, I remember you from the bus. You showed me the sign through the window: BEWARE OF THE CONTROLLERS. I would like to thank you for alerting me to their ways. I was in the restaurant tonight and noticed you. Please write to me. lucy.lovelock@twentyfirst.com*

When she went back towards the restaurant she spotted the waiter with the shoulder length hair. He was serving a table near the entrance at the far end of the restaurant. Lucy smiled at the young lad behind the bar; she could see he was making up drinks for some customers. Without giving it another thought she walked up to the bar, "Please give this to your friend," she said to him, and she pointed to the lad in question.

"John," said the barman.

"Yes, John," answered Lucy

"Please give it to him," repeated Lucy, and she handed over the note.

12

When they arrived at the Woodcutter's apartment Lucy sat down on the settee in the living room. The room was sparse; it reminded her of room number 704 at the Academy of Entertainment where the Controllers met.

"The same contractor probably carried out the work," reckoned Lucy. Lucy laughed at her thoughts: "I will need to stop thinking like a Controller when there is no need to."

The Woodcutter roared as he entered the well-lit main room of his flat, "Those taxi drivers are so entertaining - don't you think. He should be on the stage that man. He is a comedian." And after throwing his jacket off over a wooden chair, he cried out, "Right let's have something to drink!"

For a time they talked about Scream TV. Lucy thankfully had managed to avoid drinking any wine, and she got herself a bottle of mineral water from the little fridge by the drinks cabinet in the main room. In no time at all, she noticed that The Woodcutter and Lex were well into their second bottle of wine. About an hour had passed when the conversation changed: "Shall we play our favourite game, Lex," slurred the Woodcutter.

Lex although flushed and drunk seemed to sober up, and he nodded in the direction of the Chief Controller. Then he said slowly, "Why not!" And as he looked over at Lucy, he added, "I am sure Lucy will be impressed."

The Woodcutter looked across at Lex to see if he was ready, then he roared, "It's our little party trick Lucy. Lex can normally perform it at short notice."

Lex nodded and slurred, "Normally."

"Whatever are they going to do," wondered Lucy.

The Woodcutter finished his drink, put his glass down on the floor by his feet, took off his suit jacket, loosened his striped braces, then he lay under the glass coffee table in the room where they had been drinking.

Lucy took her drink in hand and stood up. She could not imagine what was going to happen next. She watched Lex take off his jeans, and throw his stripy jazzy boxer shorts across the room. He then strode half naked across the glass coffee-table.

"Thankfully, he has still got on his favourite khaki tee shirt, even though it is short and only reaches to his waist. His socks don't half look funny though," thought Lucy, "There like the ones Boy Scouts wear, long, nearly up to the knees."

Lucy held the glass of water up to her face in terror. The side-splitting fear was made worse when she noticed for the first time how drunk they were. She thought about shutting her eyes, or even running away. Then like some wondrous baby, Lex emptied his bowls on top of the glass coffee-table. Meanwhile, she noticed underneath him the Chief Controller wriggling about in ecstasy.

After a few horrible seconds, Lucy heard a groan from Lex, and through a dark cloud of steam she watched his bare bottom move up off the table. The Chief Controller lay quite still under the table.

"Well, I guess that's it over," said Lucy to herself.

It was obvious that Lex had performed, as he put it, his party trick before. He immediately lifted the glass from the table and carefully took it through to the bathroom situated on the right hand side of the main room.

The Woodcutter gently got up, and it was at this point as if her senses have been shut off, Lucy sensed in her lungs the putrid smell that immediately made her want to throw up. She for some reason at that desperate moment thought about what her Grandmother, once said to her: "TV people are funny, Lucy."

"I'll be off now, Mr Grindford," Lucy said quietly.

Mr Grindford did not seem to hear her at first; he was over at the cabinet pouring himself another drink. However, as Lucy left the room she heard the Woodcutter say in a strange quiet voice: "I'll see that the money goes into the bank for you, Lucy."

Lucy heard her own voice inside her reply, "Hopefully, I will have found a new job by that time."

Mirror the World

1

Somehow, Lucy Lovelock managed to get a job in the national library in town. Her last employer, the Academy of Entertainment, must have forwarded a nice reference to them. This was unbelievable for Lucy had revealed to the outside world the Academy's strange practices, and had been unofficially paid off. The young lady from the south side of Glasgow had found out how the Academy controlled the nation by the output of television. Lucy had warned everyone she knew about it. After leaving the Academy, she launched a web page on how to avoid being controlled by the media. She had received many e-mails thanking her for being brave enough to do this.

It was only natural as she sat on the bus this morning on her way to start her new job that she thought about the past, as well as the present, "Well, I may have been sacked, but I am glad to be out of there. They must have thought the best thing to do was not to mess with Miss Lucy Lovelock."

Lucy was not bitter about what had happened: "Ah well, it's their loss, I guess - time to look forward not back."

Twenty minutes later, in a confident manner, Miss Lovelock pushed open one of the large doors of the main reference library in town. And as she did so she paused for a moment just to catch her own reflection in the glass. Lucy before going inside the grand building smiled to herself; anyone who knew Lucy Lovelock would have recognised this smile right away.

"Well, I hope the people who work here at the national library in Glasgow are not as bizarre as the ones at the Academy of Entertainment - that's all I can say."

The first person she met inside the library was an appealing middle-aged blonde woman. She noticed her right away; for she was sitting in front of a small computer terminal at the reception desk of the library. The strange thing about her, Lucy thought, was that she appeared to be living in two worlds at the same time, here at the library, and somewhere else. "I wonder which one she prefers?" Lucy asked herself.

When she looked up and saw Lucy standing there, the blonde woman, declared, "Oh, the new start," and as the pencil in her hand fell onto the counter in front of her, she added cautiously, "That's right, you have to start today."

Lucy at first thought her attractive for her age, but when she noticed her lips this for some reason changed her opinion about her. Although they were of a reasonable shape and size, her lips Lucy felt were cold, un-kissable. In a strange merry tone the middle-aged blonde woman went on, "Oh, I believe, you have got to go to level two and wait there. I am sure I heard someone say that just the other day."

As if all new starts had to be made uncomfortable, and slightly nervous, the middle aged blonde woman then got up and turned her back on Lucy.

Lucy watched her walk away over to the far side of the library. The woman once there pushed a door open that Lucy could see led to some other section of the library. Not knowing how to get to level two, Lucy just stood there for a moment, and looked at the tall thin security guard standing by the counter. She could not help but notice the long thin scar on his face. He seemed a tough nut. In fact, he looked like the ones that fight in town on a Saturday night, in the city centre of Glasgow. He was standing there quite the thing reading his newspaper. The paper was open of course at the sports page. Lucy had heard that the majority of council workers in the city were Roman Catholics, and Roman Catholics, she knew, all supported 'the Celtic'.

How they all got jobs in the council was a mystery. The main library, even though it was now run by a trust, controlled all the other branches in town. Lucy had heard that the new trust had big ideas and wanted to change many things. The money still came of course from the taxpayers. The Trust gave the library an air of independence and modernity, while the council alliance gave it respectability within the city.

Suddenly, the head of the library appeared in the foyer. In a dream-like state, the woman walked towards the security barrier. And there at the counter she placed something on the receptionist's desk. After this mundane task, she pirouetted and headed back from whence she came.

Lucy could tell she was in charge of the place just by the look on her face, "That woman lives in a posh dream, a million miles from reality," was how her young mind put it.

As if hearing those very words somewhere in space and time the woman suddenly stopped walking, and looked round at Lucy. Then, after a moment or two, in a luxurious tone, that fitted her dreamlike state, she said out loud, "Ah, the new girl, that's right, you have to start work today."

When she stood in front of Lucy, the woman for some unknown reason just stared into her blue eyes. Lucy felt the stare was not inquisitive or natural - no it was cold and calculating. She could tell the woman was searching for defects within her, areas to be worked on.

Lucy thought the head of the library secretive and unkind. This was a strange combination for her to cope with. As Lucy stared back into her strange little eyes, out of the blue a name appeared for her: "Yes, I will call you Ms Cyanide: for you are cunning and deadly."

Just then, some foreign students arrived with backpacks on and milled around the reception area of the library. This seemed to help Lucy relax. After chatting in Italian amongst themselves some of them walked forward, and were duly asked to fill in temporary membership forms by the assistant. She told them: "By doing this you will be able to gain access to the library, and all the facilities we have: computer terminals, fax machines, books, and audio equipment."

Ms Cyanide looked over at them and slowly scrutinised the students, one by one, in the same way as she had done with Lucy. Lucy wondered what was going on. Sometimes she could understand the thoughts in strangers' eyes. She could usually tell what people were thinking about, but not this time: for no words entered into her young mind to help her. Her mind was blank, just like the faraway wall she was now staring at.

As Ms Cyanide turned away, in a dream like voice, she spoke again, "Yes, you had better come with me," she said slowly.

The phantom in charge of the library then glided through the security barriers once more, towards the lift situated behind the reception area. For whatever reason, once inside the small lift she never looked at Lucy, and no words were spoken until they got out at level three.

As they approached what seemed to be an area where people could access computers, and company registered data banks, the woman in charge of the library spoke again to Lucy, "Yes, this is the Learning Centre throughout the day students from all over the world come here to study. People also come here who wish to check company records. The Centre is open from Monday till Thursday, from nine in the morning until 8 p.m in

the evening. On a Friday and Saturday, we shut at five o'clock in the evening."

Lucy, as they approached the Learning Centre, looked in through the glass doors, and when she saw many people studying there, for something to say she said to her, "It looks big."

Ms Cyanide scoffed, "It is big," and stared at Lucy as if detecting a weakness within her.

Presently, Ms Cyanide pushed one of the glass doors open, and walked up to where there was a woman in a rugby shirt sitting. The woman, who looked in her mid-thirties, was there to book in the students who wanted to use the facilities. Lucy also noticed a large sheet of white paper in front of her, and some names that had already been written onto it. She imagined their names were also entered into the computer in front of her.

Once all the students had been logged in, the woman in charge of the library went forward and said to her, "This is Ms Lovelock, she is temping for us at the moment. Please show her how to book in the new members, and of course how to switch on and off the computer terminals."

Then after a tentative smile, and a look down at Lucy's patent shoes, the snooty Ms Cyanide turned and left the Learning Centre. When the woman, in the rugby shirt stood up, Lucy could see she fitted the Scrum half character perfectly. If truth be told, she was more like a Russian doll. In fact, when she spoke to Lucy, she was so loud the whole of the library could hear her. She hollered in a common accent: "You mark their names down here on a piece of paper, and non members you give them a temporary library ticket number to use, then you enter their details into the computer!"

Lucy, as she stood there, thought her most unattractive. She looked like a 20th century coalman's daughter, transported into the 21st century as a cosmic joke. She typified the expression she had heard in the city: 'As attractive as a Glasgow librarian.'

The Scrum half stared at a newly arrived client, before saying aggressively, "Can I help you!"

The middle-aged man naturally hesitated, then he came forward. "Ticket!" The Scrum half growled at him. And after she glanced down at the time sheet in front of her, she looked up again and slurred, "You'll be lucky, there are not many spaces left."

Lucy watched the Scrum half, for she was now trying to ignore the man standing there in front of her. Lucy could see it was going to be good fun working with her.

The man said politely. “I am here from Lebanon.”

“So!” immediately replied the Scrum half back at him.

Wondering if he had just been transported back into a war zone the man stuttered in a tentative foreign tone, “I am over here from Lebanon due to the troubles there. I am studying philosophy, and would like to use the library facilities please.”

This made no impression on the Scrum half. She looked at him as if he were to blame for the war in his country, as well as all the troubles in the rest of the world too. The Scrum half finally took his details, and then she wrote something down on the white sheet of paper in front of her. After he had signed the temporary membership form, the Scrum half looked over at Lucy, as if to say, ‘Watch and learn, this is how you deal with them.’ In an abrupt manner, she squawked, “Right number 31,” and pointed to the aforementioned terminal.

When the middle-aged gent from Lebanon eventually sat down, the Scrum half turned to Lucy and advised her, “You have got to be hard on them in here, or they will lead you a merry dance.” Then after a pause, she scowled and added: “You get them all in here, you know, philosophers, writers, academics - a bunch of losers if you ask me.”

Lucy laughed at her tone, and the way she contorted her face when she spoke. It was as if just at that moment someone had just betrayed her to her worst enemy. To distract herself, Lucy looked over at some of the people who were quietly working away on their computers, then in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion she tried to appeal to her better side, “I am sure they are some nice people who come here too, are there not?”

The Scrum half for a moment looked at Lucy, as if trying to figure her out. Then she scowled: “After about a week, you will change your tune.”

A woman not long after this arrived in the Learning Centre and started working there; she looked a little out of place. The woman seemed hypnotised by the surroundings. She wore a two piece black suit and her hair was in the style of the early Beatles pop group. It soon became apparent that she was hard of hearing. Whoever she was she looked hell of a funny, as she peered out at the academic world around her through two small thick lenses.

“I will call her the Deaf Beatle,” said Lucy to herself laughing, “I know there was a fifth Beatle - the producer, well now there is a sixth one - a deaf one.”

Just then, a man in a smart Harris tweed jacket, light coloured flannels, white shirt, tartan tie, and soft green hat, appeared in the Learning

Centre. The man seemed to understand the hard nut standing beside Lucy in the rugby top. He paused for a moment, then he smiled at her. In a polite manner, he said: "Computer please."

After collecting a set of headphones out of a basket behind her, he then walked smartly over towards one of the computers in the middle of the Learning Centre. Lucy noticed that the man as he passed by her looked at her with soft brown kind eyes, and just for a moment she thought she could feel him coming towards her, just like her friend Tom Kolanski used to do before they made love.

When he had sat down at his computer, the Scrum half grudgingly turned to Lucy and said, "He's a writer," and blew out some air, as if a hurricane had just gone by. "You will find out about him sooner, rather than later. He's one to watch, all right. He writes in and complains about everything: the staff, the toilets, if the clocks are not working, if there are not enough terminals available for the students to use."

It seemed to be the way that the workers in the library worked for an hour in each department, then for some unknown reason they were moved on to another department to work there too. When it reached 10 30 am on the desk clock in the Learning Centre, Lucy was told by the Scrum half that she would now have go to the fourth floor and work there, in the Arts department.

"Oh, I like art," Lucy said out loud, "that should be fun."

Feeling quite relaxed, she nearly added, "You know, my friend is an artist," but she stopped herself from doing so: for she knew that a description of Tom Kolanski so early in the morning in the middle of the main library in town, would not just be difficult, but outrageous, to conjure up. In any case Lucy, by this time in life, had learnt to hide her friends from strangers, for experience had taught her that the two did not mix.

"It's an oil and water situation, my dear," as her friend Tom Kolanski would say to her, when they spoke about it.

On the fourth floor, Lucy met a grey haired, stout man with glasses, another odd ball, "I will call you Daffy: for when you walk you waddle like a duck," Lucy said to herself directly after meeting him.

In a voice that tried ever so hard to have authority, Daffy moaned to her, "Yes, I believe, this morning you have to work here at the counter and take requests from the customers." Then after a sigh, and another moan about the weather, he continued, "I guess if someone brings a book back, just put it over there on the trolley, or here on the cabinet, and it will no doubt end up behind the scenes again."

Daffy, as if in a dream, lamented, "It all happens, you know, behind the scenes."

Lucy smiled and replied, "Yes, I am sure it does."

Nothing much was happening at the moment, so for something to do, Lucy just looked at the cabinet beside her, and read the title of a book lying there: *They Die with their Boots Clean*.

Out of the blue a bright-faced young man appeared. Lucy liked him right away. It was that doubled edged sword of tragedy and kindness that he had dancing in his eyes that appealed to her.

It was obvious he was from Australian. "Jack's the name," he said, and put out a timid hand to greet her.

"Hi, Jack," Lucy beamed back, "Lucy Lovelock."

"Are you doing, all right, then, Lucy," he inquired in a kind voice.

Jack for a moment just seemed to stare into Lucy's blue eyes. However, after some chat about everyday things in life: the time, the weather, and the state of the country, he went off to get a book for an author whom he said was coming in later that day. In good spirits, as he walked away from her, he muttered to himself, "Oh, Mr Wallace's book, every day, you know, last week I forgot to get it for him. He'll be in today, no doubt; I had better go and get it for him now, before I forget it again."

Not long after this, Daffy waddled over to the other side of the library to speak with someone there. Lucy, now all alone, had nothing much to do so she just stared at the books on the shelves all around her. And as she did so her young quizzical mind mused, "Thousands of books, thousands of titles, millions of words. I wonder what lies behind a book being written. Why are so many books written every year?"

"What is written cannot be unwritten, and what is said cannot be unsaid," she heard her friend Tom Kolanski say to her, somewhere in time and space.

"Books must in someway mirror the world," Lucy told herself.

Then in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion, she wondered again to herself,

"Anyone, I guess, who has ever written a book must in some way want to mirror the world. Yes, that must be it: to write a book the author must be like a mirror to the world. The world must be just a sad reflection of its own self, and the job of the writer must be to reflect the images back to the reader so that they can understand them."

After taking this inside herself, Lucy seemed to understand the world much better now and, as she thought about what it was that lay behind writing a book, she promised herself, "Yes, I will keep everything inside me:

people, places, and the events that take place in time and space. I will lock them all away, and recall them when I am ready to write my book. How it all works, I have no idea - but I will be a collector of images. Yes, that's what I will be, a collector of images. I will remember every thing that happens to me. Then when the time is right, I will recall the images, bring them back to life, and put them in my book. Yes, all the things I have ever heard, all the fantastic commonplace stories that come my way, I will remember them. I will record everything. I will lock everything away in my mind until I am ready to write my book. And when the time is right, I will put the recorded images into my book, and they too will one day mirror the world. In fact, that's what I will call my book: Mirror the World. The book will sit proudly on the shelf of every library in the world, so that people can go to it for help as how to avoid the pitfalls in this life. Yes, Lucy Lovelock the novelist has a nice ring to it - has it not? I can almost see my book in print."

Observing the world now had become Lucy Lovelock's favourite subject: "I know some people act normal while they study others, and some look out of place, but I will run ahead of myself and rehearse my own part, before I play it here in this life. What was it Tom is always saying: 'Every woman born of woman is an actress. The majority know what part to play, some forget their lines, while others make it up as they go along.' Well, I will remember my lines."

"You like working here?" said a Highland voice.

Lucy quickly looked round, and stared at him. She had seen him briefly before in the Learning Centre. He was casually dressed, bald, slightly overweight, and she noticed he walked with a pretence limp. She could see from his badge, even though it was lying lopsided below the pocket of his dishevelled denim shirt, that his name was Gordon. "Strange and canny," was what Lucy thought.

In typical Highland fashion, he told her that he was lucky to have been employed here at the library, "They don't usually employ people from where I come from," he said to her with a shrewd nod."

Lucy's neighbour was from North Uist. She had never had any direct contact with her relatives, but she had gathered her thoughts from afar, as regards the people who lived there. Apparently, you could tell a person's religious persuasion from the part of the island they came from: north was predominantly Protestant, while the south was Roman Catholic. She remembered again that here in her own city it was said that the council was controlled by Roman Catholics. She had no idea if it were true or not.

Lucy thought Highland people curious: "It's as if they have far too much time on their hands to think about things in life."

The landscape, however, where they came from seemed to her beautiful, changeable and unreal, and she wanted to go there one day and see it for herself.

"I like this floor with all the art books on it," she said to Gordon for something to say.

Gordon laughed and seeing Aussie Jack return back with the book in his hand, for Mr Wallace, a knowing grin crossed his round puffy face. He winked at Jack, then said to Lucy in a dry tone, "I will ask you the same question in a few weeks time, and see if I get the same answer."

The Highland man then looked down at the book in Jack's hand, and he said to him: "They say, you know, there is to be another change in the shift patterns next month."

The Australian man answered him in a bright tone, "Yes, I believe so Gordon. The directive has come down from upstairs, from the head of the department, has it not?"

The two men then looked at each other as if inhabiting the future together and, as they stared, they both tried in their own way to figure things out for themselves. The Highland man, Lucy noticed, seemed worried while the Australian man appeared unconcerned. Lucy smiled and feeling quite relaxed now she asked the question she was longing to, "What happens upstairs on level six, then?"

Although, the conversation up until this point had been light, mundane, trivial even, Lucy noticed that after she had asked this question the two men looked at each other, and for some unknown reason the atmosphere became tense. She had been told at the interview that if she got the job in the Learning Centre she would be working on the first five floors of the building, but only managers and officials had access to the upper levels of the building.

Lucy smiled at Jack and asked him again in a hopeful tone: "So what happens upstairs, then?"

Jack sighed as he said to her in a strange honest tone, "No one knows, Lucy: for very few are allowed up there."

Just then, Daffy waddled over and stood at the little counter in front of them and, as he picked up a book that a customer had returned, he croaked in a strange tone, "Keeping busy, are we?"

When it got to midday someone phoned and told Lucy that she had to go back down to the Learning Centre. She didn't recognize the man's voice. Apparently, she had now to take charge of booking customers into

the Learning Centre again until the afternoon. She would be on her own from now on, going from department to department, working here, working there.

In the Learning Centre, Lucy sat down at her desk. She could see that it was quite quiet in the Centre today, so she glanced over to where some people were working away on the Internet. And as she did this, she couldn't help but wonder to herself what a strange assortment of people they were who came here to the library every day: "They are unfashionable, inhibited, secretive, foreign looking…"

After a chuckle at her thoughts, Lucy grinned and admitted to herself, "I guess the people who come here to the library every day just want to mirror the world in the same way as I do."

Lucy as she smiled at her abstract thoughts seemed to come alive and fit in with the surroundings inside the library where she now worked, and for the first time she felt part of it all.

The Highland man appeared again. He didn't seem to notice her mood. He was looking for Aussie Jack. Shaking his head, as he looked around him, he asked in a hurry, "Where is he?" Then, as if he were about to leave quickly again, in typical dry humour he added, "Managing, all right, are we?"

Lucy feeling relaxed smiled at him, then replied, "I am just waiting for the hordes to arrive."

"Oh, they will be here all right," said the canny man, "Believe me, they are coming your way."

She didn't have to wait long. The first person to appear was a nondescript painfully thin man. Lucy had seen him somewhere this morning in the library. She had heard that he was always in the first batch to book into the Learning Centre. The strange thing about him was that his face told no immediate story. Lucy quickly found a name for him in her imagination: "I will call you the Technophobe."

She reckoned that he was so lonely that the only people he could chat with were the staff here at the library, so that was why he came here every day just to speak to them. He would ask them questions about computers, the Internet, and other electronic devices they had within the Learning Centre. Normally, she would feel sympathy for anyone who was lonely, but for some odd reason not this chap. The Technophobe was quite friendly. He was relatively young, late thirties. Lucy had heard that when something went wrong with a computer in the Learning Centre, he was over like a shot and would engage whoever it was on duty, as regards the internal, or external, workings of the faulty computer. Apparently, these conversations

could go on for hours. The staff, like Lucy, had not been trained as regards the internal workings of a computer but, like Lucy, many people who worked at the library had computers at home and could figure different things out for themselves: what to do after they crashed, how to reboot them, and so on. Lucy promised herself she would avoid a technological attack from the lonely man if she saw one coming.

2

There had been a storm during the night and naturally everyone struggled to get to work the next day. Lucy at the last minute decided to leave her jeep at home, and take the bus. She was lucky; for as soon as she turned the corner that morning she saw the bus coming down the main road, and she ran and managed to catch it. However, all the way into town she noticed angry faces dotted here and there around bus stops and shelters. For some reason there seemed to be a lot of people waiting for buses this morning, and not getting on them. And as she looked out of the window, as they passed the old Victoria Infirmary Hospital, she heard the reason why. Someone behind her on the bus lamented: "I'm just phoning to tell you that all the trains are off this morning, because of the storm last night. Can you imagine - I had to take the bus…"

Lucy marvelled at the way nature in the extreme brought people together. When she got to work, she noticed how the storm had affected everyone there too. She headed quickly for the fourth floor taking the stairs. The staff on the different floors of the library, as she passed them by, seemed to her subdued, meek, philosophical, even blue. It was as if everyone had a story to tell as regards why they were late for work this morning.

After chatting about the unusual weather, Lucy was told by Daffy on the fourth floor that she had to go to the Learning Centre on the second floor and sign in all the new customers there. As soon as she arrived there the Scrum half spotted her coming through the glass doors, and she swaggered over to speak to her. Right away she spoke to Lucy about her favourite football team. In a rough labourer's voice, she squawked, "Not a bad result, last night, eh."

Lucy had no time for football so she just smiled. Lucy could see that the Scrum half was pleased that her team had beaten their arch rivals. "It's a grand old team," croaked the Scrum half.

Just then, the Duty Manager appeared with a time sheet in his hand. She thought he looked like an Irish wolfhound with high blood pressure. The Irish Wolfhound stared at her as he asked the Scrum half in a dominant tone, "Where's Jack?"

In typical fashion the Scrum half answered him back in a bullish tone, "Don't ask me."

Lucy looked at the Duty Manager, and tried to understand him. She had noticed the Irish Wolfhound before, although she didn't know what he did, or where he worked. He would just suddenly appear here and there on the different floors of the library. She had noticed that wherever he went he always carried a sheet of paper in is hand. When he entered a department, he looked about the place, then disappeared. When she thought about him, she remembered that he was always picking up other bits of paper too, as he went through the different departments, and leaving them down again. She took them to be back up time sheets as regards the people employed at the library. The woman in charge of the library, Ms Cyanide, sometimes accompanied him on his rounds. However, she was not with him today.

In his usual manner, the Technophobe came in for his morning stint on the computer. In a bright happy tone, he bent over the desk and said to Lucy, "I fixed the e-mail problem last night by contacting the host company when I got home!"

Lucy smiled and as she booked him in for his two hours stint on the computer, for something to say she replied: "Oh, I am sure the library manager would have done that for you if you had asked him nicely."

After saying this she noticed the Wolfhound glare over at her. His eyes had a cold look in them, as if thinking about how to block out human emotions. In fact, he looked as if he was about to explode. Things were quiet this morning so Lucy thought she would asked the Scrum half about the Irish Wolfhound, "What's his job title?" she said casually, after he had gone.

The Scrum half said nothing, and Lucy took from the look on her face that these kinds of questions were not to be asked in the library at this time of the day, or maybe even at anytime of the day.

In the privacy of her own mind, Lucy played her part in the drama, "I guess the Duty Manager comes in here, and just floats around, then disappears."

Feeling bold, Lucy asked the Scrum half another question, "What happens up there on the 6th floor, then?"

Hearing no reply she put down her pen and looked at the Scrum half standing beside her and, as normal when coming up against a brick wall, in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion she quietly tapped her foot on the floor, and said, "Well."

Lucy thought the angry face of the Scrum half interesting; to her it looked like it was a cross between a Roman street seller and a Red Indian. Although she was angry, Lucy noticed the Scrum half had fear in her eyes, as if she were about to be asked to declare her sins. Suddenly, in a harsh tone, the Scrum half croaked, "You don't ask these kinds of questions in here. You only go up there if you are going to be sacked."

Lucy could see Jack and Daffy, and some others she had not met yet, over on the far side of the library, returning books back up onto the shelves. Some of the workers were sitting on the floor while others were leaning up against the wooden book cabinets. She knew that she would have to do this job sometime. Just then, the Highland man walked over and joined the group. In a relaxed manner, he picked up a book, cannily tapped it, then looked at its serial number. After this polite pretence, he joined in with the others and started refilling the shelves.

Even though she was a good distance away from them, Lucy heard a man's voice whisper: "I hear they are going through their usual rituals again upstairs…"

Then after a moment or two a woman's voice said in an excited tone, "They say the Piggy is going to be there the next time."

Someone in the crowd laughed, then a voice added, "They're all off their heads…"

Lucy listened in carefully, but she heard nothing after this. When she looked over again she saw the Highland man turn round and stare at her. Then when he turned away again, she heard him say in his quaint Highland voice to someone: "Best not say any more. The new girl might hear and get the wrong impression."

It appeared to Lucy, even at this early stage, that something was wrong with the people who were in charge of the library. Ms Cyanide was an odd ball, there was no doubt about that in her mind. "It's the way she speaks; I mean she speaks as if on behalf of another person. And who is the Piggy?"

Just at that moment, a student looked over at her from one of the terminals not far from where she sat. The student smiled at Lucy as if empathising with her. She seemed to understand her worried thoughts, her

anxious look. Lucy for a moment just stared at her green eyes and her mousy brown hair. She was an attractive girl with a style the magazines liked: 'The just got out of bed look,' as they called it. She thought she was Polish, Russian, or Latvian, something like that. Lucy smiled back at her, then she checked the computer in front of her for any updates, as she was told to do.

The Technophobe came over again and tried to engage her in conversation. In a quivering voice, he muttered, "I don't know if you have ever had any problems using your computer. I'm having problems at the moment burning data onto a CD. I know CD's are old-fashioned, but I like to store my files on them. I like to keep them as back up copies just in case I lose my work…"

And on and on he went like some awful kind of living computer. Moments later, Lucy could see people gathering behind him waiting to be booked in. She searched for someone's eyes to escape from him. Thankfully, she found a client about three faces down the line, and this seemed to block out the Technophobe. Lucy couldn't help but notice that the foreign eyes she was staring into were full of strange designs. A dance jingle went off on a mobile phone somewhere, then someone coughed. Lucy suddenly remembered who the eyes belonged to. "It's the young lady whose e-mail handle is: Funky Diva."

She knew this for yesterday when Lucy had closed down her terminal, she noticed that she had left her e-mail account open on the computer screen. The copy of her e-mail, she remembered read: 'Please contact me for girlie fun. Funky Diva'.

Lucy could tell she liked her own sex, and now that she thought about it she had seen her on the late night bus one time. It was around midnight in the city centre. "That's right Funky Diva picked up a woman from a bar in town."

Lucy as she stared at the image remembered more about the evening. "The young woman she pulled that night was not all that attractive. I remember, she was plainly dressed, dumpy and drunk. It was so funny that I laughed myself to sleep that night when I got home."

In fact, she nearly laughed out loud for Funky Diva, she could not help but remember had the babe on her knee that night, and had manfully held onto her prize possession all the way home, as the bus travelled out of the town centre towards the south side of the city. Yes, it was Funky Diva all right. She was always feminine looking, and had quite a sexy body. Yes indeed, it was the very same person. She had picked up a young woman from a gay club in Glasgow. Lucy remembered more of the details about

her, as she stood waiting for the Technophobe to end his bizarre conversation about burning information onto CD ROM's.

Thankfully, when the Technophobe finally finished speaking, Lucy booked in all those who were wanting to go on to the computers this morning. Not long after this, some out of work lads came into the Learning Centre, and went straight over to the far side of the room. One of the lads, as they passed by her, said: "We are on a Back to Work course." And another one cheekily added, "Want to join us?"

Immediately when they got over there they started swearing and throwing things at each other. Lucy looked over at them. She was glad she had nothing to do with them. Apparently, this was the usual thing that happened before the instructor arrived. The rest of the day was pretty boring for her: booking in students and getting them to fill in forms so that they could join the library and enjoy all the facilities.

The afternoon seemed to drag and, as she stared at her watch, she thought to herself, "At the beginning of every week, I will need too buy a woman's magazine and keep it with me, God, how time crawls in here in the afternoons…"

3

Kolanski appeared that night up at her house, and Lucy had a bone to pick with him: "You said that I came back to yours last week for afters."

Jenny Penny had picked this up from Kolanski when she had met him in town last week. Kolanski in his usual way laughed it off. In his deep impressive voice, he replied, "If you look it up in the dictionary, old bean, you will read that the meal that follows the main course is called 'afters' that's all, sweetheart, nothing more, nothing less…"

"There is a sexual connotation to it - you know that, Kolanski."

Kolanski coolly winked at her, "Darling, there is a sexual connotation to everything, these days."

Although, Kolanski was outrageous, Lucy knew he would not on purpose try to bring her down. She would let it go this time. Although they were no longer lovers, Lucy still liked Kolanski, she could trust him. Kolanski was older than her. She reckoned he was now about 35 years of age. He was eccentric. He dressed like a rich artist, even though he didn't have two beans to rub together. He would say silly things at times, but he was reliable. And in life, Lucy knew that most people were unreliable, and in one way or another against her.

In fact, Lucy reckoned the majority of people she came across were batting for the other side. However, having said that Lucy, found the other side - the dark side - fascinating. She often wondered to herself what it was in nature that perpetually tries to destroy all the good things in this life. Lucy made fun of her adversaries whenever she could, maybe one day she would write that book, Mirror the World, right enough, and expose all the evildoers she has come across. Yes, Lucy Lovelock, given the chance would make fun of them, all right.

Kolanski she knew had suffered in life. Just last week she was with him in a bar in town when a divorced man accused him of sleeping with a crippled girl. She knew Kolanski had not, but by all accounts the man who had accused him had. Lucy could tell this by the way the man had spoken to Kolanski. The evil was mixed in with his words. Just by listening to him it was plain to see that everyone who had known this girl must have done the same thing as he had done. There was nothing wrong with what he had done, if his intentions had been honourable. Lucy thought to herself: "But were they honourable? I think not."

Everything became apparent to Lucy when Kolanski said to the man, "Oh, she is a lovely girl," and the man seized upon this, and tried to defame her character. Lucy knew that if he had any love for her, he would not have reacted like this, and the two men would have been in agreement with each other.

Lucy recalled Kolanski had looked sad when the divorced man had abused him, as they sat opposite each other inside the west end bar. His spirits, however, soon picked up; for on the way out of the bar Kolanski, she remembered, had whispered to her: "Not me, Moonbeam, we were only friends - my sins lie elsewhere."

Then for good measure once outside the restaurant in his usual way he winked at her before quoting Chairman Mao: "Better a shattered piece of jade, my dear, than an unbroken pot of clay."

4

The next morning, Lucy as usual collated the application cards of the people who had joined the library the day before. Not long after she had finished this daily task a tall Indian student, verging on the heavy side, came hurrying into the Learning Centre. He looked worried: "Looks as if he has forgotten his pen drive, or his car keys, or something like that."

As he looked over at the machines in the Learning Centre, he said tentatively: "Did I leave my USB device in the computer? I was on the bus going home last night when I suddenly realised it wasn't in my pocket."

Lucy always ready to sympathise with someone in trouble smiled. Then for some reason she just stared at him, for she too had forgotten something: namely that the lost and found box where everything was kept lay behind her on the modern table, beside where the earphones and local directories were stacked.

As the man walked over to the computer to see if he had left his device there, Lucy pulled open the bottom drawer under her desk, "Right, let's see if we can find it in here," she said enthusiastically to herself.

As soon as she had done this, she remembered where the lost property box could be found, "Oh, you will have to look in there," she said spinning round on her chair.

When the man came back empty handed after checking the computer he had used the previous night he looked sad, and for a moment or two he did not say anything to her.

"It's not in the back of the machine," he eventually moaned in a low tone."

Lucy directed the Indian student to the cardboard box behind her. "It will most likely be in there, if it is anywhere, feel free to have a look," she said encouragingly, pointing the way.

Just as she was about to shut the bottom drawer, under her desk, she noticed there was a letter lying there, near the back of it. Without thinking too much about it she picked up the small white envelope, and stared at the handwriting, then she opened the letter and started to read it out loud to herself:

340 charter councils,
32 provinces
Head office Glasgow
Little Vatican
Roman gods
Meeting tonight, sixth floor
New Pope to be elected

"How very strange," thought Lucy, as she looked at the skull and the bones on the letterhead, "Whatever do they do up there on the six floor?"

Then as if in a dream, Lucy put the letter back inside the envelope and shut the drawer. Just at that moment, the Irish Wolfhound came bursting into the Learning Centre. His face was bright red. He looked as if he was about to explode. He seemed upset and certainly in a hurry to get somewhere. He brushed by the Indian man who was still looking for his USB device in the lost and found box. Without saying a word, the Irish Wolfhound opened the bottom drawer, and grabbed the letter out of it. Then he went straight back out of the door again without saying a word.

The Technophobe came over at that moment and smiled at Lucy; his thin face happy to be anxious. In a strange way, he seemed to understand the people who had chosen to work at the library, and those who were in charge of running it from the sixth floor. "I don't know if you know this, but if you are having a problem with your computer you can go to an excellent web site: Gotaproblemwithyourpc."

Still in shock, Lucy wondered what was going on. "No, I didn't know that," she said as if interested.

"Yes, you can download a lot of free programs from their web site. I came across it in a magazine. It's really helpful, you know…"

Lucy just smiled and listened to him. However, naturally as she stood there her thoughts turned towards the letter she had just read, and the events that had just taken place around her in the Learning Centre. When

she thought about the way the Irish Wolfhound had come into the department it made her shiver: "He was like a man possessed." She saw him again in her mind's eye grabbing the letter out of the bottom drawer, before going straight out of the door again. "What do those strange words and signs mean?" she wondered. When she remembered the skull and the bones on the letterhead, she nervously laughed to herself, "Whatever is going on? Little Vatican, Roman gods, Meeting tonight, sixth floor New Pope to be elected."

Lucy got off her chair immediately and picked up a book that was lying on the desk in front of her. She hadn't noticed who had left it there. Lucy read the title then the author's name, George Fox, "Someone has no doubt left it here to be put behind the scenes again. Behind the scenes," murmured her inner voice, as if to an inquisitive mind somewhere out there in space.

It was a very old book. She looked at the cover again, and when the Technophobe had gone away, with nothing much to do, she started to read it. She liked the writing. Lucy could make decisions about things right away. One thing Lucy loved to do was to read someone's paperback book over their shoulder, or beside her, on the bus, or on the train. Lucy maintained that after just reading one line of a book she could somehow understand the whole book, as well as the person reading it. Yes, her thoughts could Mirror the World around her.

Carefully, she turned another page of the old book. It was just after she had done this that she noticed a bit of paper stuck there between two pages near the middle of the book. It was a letter. The letter seemed old - very old indeed - like the book itself.

Whoever finds this letter, please be aware that the people who run the library are evildoers: acting only for themselves. Every year they act out a bizarre ceremony on the sixth floor to elect a new Pope. They are up to no good, they are bad types; they are against the good people who live in the city.

Lucy thought: "Gosh here we go again, if it's not someone on a bus showing me a sign, it's a note being pressed between the pages of an old library book. Whatever next?"

Somehow as she stared at the strange piece of paper, she came to her senses: "What should I do? I mean, should I take it seriously? They are a funny crowd, right enough, who work in here. I will have to take care of myself, for something sinister is going on at the library; I can feel it in my bones."

Moments later, Daffy, in his usual dream state, came wandering into the Learning Centre this time to use the little mobile phone, lying in the

middle of the desk. After he had dialled an internal number, for most of the time he just stood there beside Lucy, nodded and said, "Yes, yes, I know what you mean…"

Then a few moments later, he moaned in a fractured voice. "Well, that's the logical progression, I guess, after there has been a final warning…"

It soon became clear to Lucy from what Daffy was saying that someone had been sacked, and there was to be a hearing sometime within the next few weeks. Lucy felt that most of the staff acted as if they were part of the management; they seemed at times hypnotised by the unseen management who operated from the sixth floor. This was quite a new thing to Lucy: how workers identified with their superiors on such a level.

"They don't understand freedom! Why are they obedient to just about every directive? Why is there is no demarcation line between workers and management? There is a massive difference, I bet, in the wage structure, and the perks, so why are the workers so scared to say anything out loud against the management here at the library? It's as if any action against the management is futile. It must be that they feel that any attack on the library is an attack on themselves. I wonder why there is no healthy division between the two parties: workers and management."

On closer inspection, Daffy seemed to be in on it, but Lucy could not figure it out yet. However, in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion, she told herself that she would get to the bottom of it before too long. The Australian lad was nice though and Lucy, later that morning during coffee in the canteen, asked him in a friendly voice: "Jack, how many managers are there in here? And how many of them work on the sixth floor?"

Jack laughed when he heard her say this, as if someone had suddenly tickled him under his arms. Then he shook his head and said in a tone not unlike her mother: "Oh Lucy, you can ask the questions at this time in the morning."

"And who is the Piggy?"

Jack smiled and gave in: "Oh, they gave Ms Girvan that name. She is in overall charge of the Trust. She is a large blonde woman; you will see her in the canteen. She is always talking to that other big woman with the red hair."

Jack laughed to himself at the image of the two fat ladies and, then just in case one of them was sitting near him in the canteen at that moment, he looked around himself cautiously. Jack seemed to be quite at ease now, so Lucy took the opportunity to question him about the secret society operating within the library.

"They asked me to join their association: The Roman Gods, but being from down under I just made up an excuse. I guess when I showed no interest in religion they just left me alone. They probably thought I was weird, daft, or something like that."

Lucy playing her part cried out, "I want to join them!"

Jack with a serious look on his face, said, "I'm afraid it is a closed shop, Lucy. You have to be proposed, seconded, and after that, you have got to go through an initiation ceremony."

"Which is?" she asked quickly.

Jack laughed, but he did not say anything more. Lucy, as she took a sip of tea, wondered to herself: "So the management here are part of some kind of secret religious society, yea."

Aussie Jack, seeing Lucy's eyes widen, whispered to her. "Better not say anymore. You never know who's about."

And when Daffy waddled into the canteen, at that moment, Lucy nodded to herself and said, "Yea, better not."

Lucy, as she looked away from Jack, spotted a woman with a comic face sitting over on the far left hand side of the canteen. She had seen her before. At times, she thought she looked pretty, yet at other times vacant. She seemed to Lucy to be acting out a character not entirely suited to her natural self. She felt that it was due to this charade - her will against her soul - that her natural face sometimes contorted.

"That's the plain clothes policewoman who comes into the library every day," Aussie Jack whispered to her, as he put down his morning newspaper,

"Right," said Lucy and laughed, "She's not very unassuming - is she."

Now that she thought about it she had seen her a few times before, checking the companies' database system which was situated over on the right hand side of the Learning Centre. Lucy felt the plain clothes policewoman actually looked hell of a funny in her dark clothes: for she seemed to be acting like a real spy in an old black and white movie. The strange thing was that the spy acted as if the audience didn't know her role, when most of them, Lucy reckoned, if they thought about it, would work it out.

Lucy remained passive. In a relaxed manner, she said to Jack, "I suppose you get a lot of activists and agent provocateurs using the library facilities every day."

"Yes," Jack agreed.

Lucy, trying to be intellectual, added quickly, "Although, I guess the majority of people who come to the library every day are just students who

are constantly searching for something lost in time, now hidden in books and computer files."

Lucy spoke to Aussie Jack about some of the people she had met inside the library since she had joined them, and when they talked about some of the characters, they both laughed like little children, finding out for the first time something odd about the grownup world around them.

After this, Jack started whistling to the background music playing in the restaurant; he didn't seem all that interested in talking anymore. And after a few minutes, he started reading his morning newspaper again. Lucy with nothing much to do fell into a long Lucy Lovelock reverie, dreaming about her love life, going on holiday, lying in bed. And if truth be told she really only came back to the world around her when she heard some of the staff talking at the next table inside the canteen: "You should get married next year when you are away in America…"

The nature of study Lucy felt was not for her; it was too lonely an occupation. Day after day now in the library, she had watched the students come into the Learning Centre, go over to a computer, sit down and study. In other parts of the library she noticed how the students would take books from the shelves, sit down somewhere, open them up and study the images from the printed words for hours upon hours. They did this day in, day out, sometimes without a break, six days a week. Most were young women. Lucy knew a lot of her friends were into this kind of thing: Life Long Learning, they called it, hence the name of the floor where she now worked. In fact, many young people put aside a period of their life just to study, and the ones who were not married were free to devote most of their time to this so called pursuit of Life Long Learning. This was not for Lucy Lovelock. Lucy didn't want to end up heading towards a midlife crises, wondering why men didn't find her attractive. Jenny Penny reckoned that when the bin men stopped whistling at you it was all over; it was time to shut the door and hide away.

Ms Cyanide, who was in charge of the department of the library where she now worked, became even more bizarre the more she thought about her. "She walks about the place as if in a dream. It's as if she lives in a perfect world designed by her own fair hand."

Lucy reckoned she must be living inside a book. She was unreal. She dressed everyday in clerical gray, and most of the time wore men's shirts and ties. Every word she spoke was exact.

"I wonder what they do up there on the sixth floor. Lucy couldn't help but ask herself again and again, "And what about the Piggy?"

Just then, a man in a blue anorak, with mousy brown hair, who looked around forty, joined then in the canteen. Lucy recognised him; it was the chap who ran the beginner's course in the Life Long Learning Centre on a Tuesday and Thursday. He was no doubt having a cup of tea before going up to instruct the over sixty five's as regards the latest technology: 'The Silver Surfers,' as they were called.

As he sat down at a table next to Lucy, he grinned and said: "The old dears will no doubt be up there just now waiting for me," Then he contorted his face, before imitating one of his clients: "How do I copy this into my documents folder?"

Everyone laughed, but on a serious note he complained about the facilities inside the library: "There are not enough terminals up there for them, you know," he moaned. "I tried to complain about it, but it is difficult to know who is in charge in here."

He then looked down at his hand that was holding a hot mug of tea, before adding in a sober tone, "You seldom see anyone from the management team; they never come down from the sixth floor. In fact, at times I wonder if they exist."

Lucy nodded and agreed, "Yes, you seldom see them - no one knows who they are?"

"Yea, your right there," replied the man in the dark blue anorak.

Lucy thought she would be bold: "It's fascinating, don't you think due to their lack of presence how the staff - the ordinary staff I mean - act as if they are the management in here, when they are of course only workers."

The man who ran the courses for the elderly just shrugged his shoulders and, as he stretched over to pick up a newspaper that someone had left lying on the table in front of him, he quipped, "It's all Greek to me, and I'm a Scot."

Lucy somewhere in time and space thought she could hear her friend Tom Kolanski say to her: "The ruling class will always manipulate the working class."

As he took another sip of tea, Lucy thought about some of the foreign men who came to the library every day, and how they would kneel down before her in the Learning Centre, to sign the forms on the desk in front of her. Lucy loved it when they did this. It was as if what her friend Tom Kolanski had said had come true: "All men must worship at the fountain of Lucy Lovelock."

Just before lunch, Lucy was asked by Daffy to pop out and buy some stamps from the main post office in town. While in the queue, she suddenly became aware of someone in distress behind her. The cry wasn't loud, but

it had everything in it that feared the Lord. When Lucy looked around her, she saw a young black African woman. She was bent over, and her head was down on the counter, opposite where the sales assistants served their clients. She was sobbing. Due to the fact that this was the main branch in the city centre there were a lot of people inside the grand building at this time of the day.

When Lucy looked over at the staff sitting behind the long counter, she could see they were all to busy to bother about the woman. One or two of the staff looked over at the woman, as did some of the customers in the queue, but what startled Lucy was that nobody was reacting to the situation and going over to help the poor woman. Lucy, always ready to help a sister in distress, wanted to go over and see if she was all right. And after she gave the woman at the counter the money for the stamps, she went in search of a chair for the young black woman to sit down on.

Lucy cautiously approached the young black woman and knelt down beside her. Tentatively, she said a few kind words to her: "Oh, don't worry it is always worse than you think."

Lucy thought she sounded like her gran when she said this, and in so doing she touched the woman's shoulder, just like her gran did when Lucy was upset or annoyed. She didn't know what to say after this, so she started telling the young woman about how her gran had got mugged outside Tesco superstore last year. If truth be told, she never really got mugged, but that's how her gran had described the incident to Lucy. It was more like someone had put their hand inside her handbag and took her pension money out of it.

Lucy, as she spoke to the woman, watched her dark African eyes shift here and there, from image to image, from right to wrong, from devil to angel. Finally, she got a word out of her. She broke down again, and said in a heavy tone: "My bus pass was in my bag."

"Hopefully a policeman, or policewoman, will be along soon," said Lucy. "And they can help you get home."

She could see that her little girl was playing quite happily behind her, not far from where the theft had taken place.

5

As usual, Lucy met the gang: Gina Cuppachino, Jenny Penny, and Kolanski for a coffee in their favourite bar in town. When Lucy got there, she noticed that Kolanski had brought along his strange friend Luxurious John. Jenny, just back from America, was very excited, for she had had such a great time in the states. She told her friends in her best Yankee voice: "Every day, you know, on holiday we had coffee in a café bar in town just like we do here."

Jenny Penny then reported to the assembled group that there was a great debate raging in the States, when she was there, about the female orgasm. "Oh, do tell," pinned Kolanski.

Lucy laughed and listened, but she had heard it all before: the vaginal and the clitoral orgasm, and how a man will always dominate a woman given half a chance. Lucy interjected, after she had ordered her coffee, "I think anyone will dominate you - if you let them Kolanski."

Kolanski, after smiling at her, sat back and said with a twinkle in his eye, "Well, girls, I have been reading an interesting book titled: The Golden Flower, and the writer, I can tell you, maintains that a man should hold back as long as possible before orgasm. Yes, you have to hold onto your 'ching' for hours before releasing it, thus giving your partner ultimate pleasure. The writer maintains that it takes a woman such a long-time to be aroused, and an even longer time to be satisfied. He says that for a woman to achieve an orgasm a man must hold back as long as possible."

It was noticeable that Kolanski looked at Lucy all the time when he was speaking. He continued after a pause: "In the East, you know, they say that the most erotic method as regards love making is foreplay."

Luxurious John was well read up on the subject too: "Yes, I have read that book. It is very interesting, I particularly like the way…"

"That's right," said Kolanski, cutting him off: "Man is from heaven and the woman is from the earth. Yes, they are great ones, you know, for not ejaculating. They train you to go for hours, and of course you can perform every night if you want to without feeling tired in the morning. Masturbation, however, never features in the training; making love to ghosts, my dears, is not for them."

Kolanski seeing he had everyone's attention quickly added, "The human psyche, you see for them, is split it to two: male and female, ying and yang. The woman is from the earth and the man from the heavens. Perfect harmony means good health and happiness. If one person has too much ying and not enough yang, then they become weak: for without the complementary heavenly male yang, they become passive; yang is the assertive male thing, you see. Apparently, it stretches right down to your genitals ladies, with the clitoral orgasm, assertive and the vaginal one passive."

Kolanski had a way with words, and as he spoke the girls all sat open mouthed staring at him. Lucy, as she sat there, did wonder about eastern mystical sexual practices, but she longed for love and someone to love. "It doesn't matter where he comes from, she told herself." As far as Lucy was concerned, Tom Kolanski and Luxurious John were chasing shadows: "You are not focusing on the real world around you, or moreover on love," she told them.

Lucy had picked up an interesting book herself, at the local church jumble sale: *Selected Mystical Writings* by William Law. When Jesus came on the scene He brought with him the truth: the word, and it remains with us today: the Holy Spirit that guides us. Law reckoned Jesus brought the light back into life from the Garden of Eden. This was of course Lucy's great obsession: the Garden of Eden, and how to get back there?

"Once we were in paradise where everything was wonderful, then we were expelled into this horrible malicious world," she often told herself.

Lucy knew that things from the material world that people always go on and on about like cars, and money, are just passing fads, and after a time they lose their value and meaning, for all material things belong to the world, and the world is, as has been already stated, in Lucy Lovelock's mind, transient, ephemeral, mundane, defunct, deadly even.

Lucy thought she had better say something. "This is not a good world Kolanski; this is an evil world where people are ready to take advantage of you whenever they get the chance. I doubt whether love from the Golden Flower will save your soul."

Everyone immediately turned and stared at Lucy. Kolanski looked uncomfortable when he heard her say this, and he quickly changed the subject. He added in a sultry tone: "Well, Jenny, did you press some flesh in the States, when you were over there?"

After the initial excitement as regards the holiday, the flight, the hotel, and so on, Lucy asked Jenny, "Meet anyone interesting?"

"Yes," cried Gina, in a strange sultry tone, as if Lucy should have heard by this time: "I met a novelist; he has written several books. And would you believe it - we had a fling."

Lucy thought about the strange novelist who goes to the Learning Centre every day. She said without thinking, "Don't you think people who write books look in on you, as if from another world - I mean they are not part of this world are they?"

"Oh, that's very good," roared Kolanski, "All novelist are from outer space; I wondered where they came from."

"The novelist would usually pop by and see me around five in the evening. He would greet me with flowers, then with kisses on both cheeks, and when we sat down together he would say outrageously funny things to me like. 'In Europe do women headhunt men?' "

When Jenny had eventually finished talking about her stateside love affair, Kolanski asked Lucy, "How is the job at the library, old bean?"

This thankfully turned the conversation back to local affairs, and Lucy replied positively, "Oh, Tom, they really are a weird crowd. Do you know that no-one is allowed to go up onto the 6th floor of the building? The management have a special silver key that they use to unlock the circuit in the lift which allows them to be taken there. When you see them do this in the lift they act as if they are all part of some kind of secret organisation."

Jenny Penny, in her newly acquired American accent, exclaimed, "Sounds to me girl that no good is going on up there!"

Tom Kolanski, was more practical, he said in his usual authoritative way, "Well, I guess, old bean, to know what really is going on up there you will have to go over to another building, and take some binoculars with you, and watch them from there." Then after a pregnant pause, he added daintily, "Then report back to us, Moonbeam."

Lucy thought about this. She didn't want to tell them about the letter she had found in the old library book, just in case they thought she had totally flipped. Quietly she said, "Yes, I think you are right, Kolanski."

There was a weird silence for a few moments, then Kolanski roared, "I'm sure Lucy Lovelock the detective will get to the bottom of it!"

Gina, seeing everyone happy now smiled, then quickly glanced at Kolanski. Presently she said, "Well ladies, did you all get an invite to Kolansky's bikini party?

Everyone nodded and looked at Tom Kolanski. Kolanski clapping his hands roared with laughter, "Yes, it's true ladies, it's that time of year again."

It was the custom at this time of the year for Tom Kolanski to hold a party in his flat on the south side of Glasgow. Last year, it was a toga party, and this year it was to be a bikini party. This was terrific news for fashionable forward thinking young things like Lucy Lovelock and Jenny Penny. The girls loved going to parties, like all young people around the world they loved to dance, dress up, and go wild.

"Can't promise you the weather ladies," Kolanski intoned, but as his eyebrows went up, he reassured them, "There will be plenty of cocktails there, my dears. And after a few drinks, I promise I will sing my favourite Scottish love song to you: "Oh my love is like a red, red, rose, newly sprung in June…"

6

Even though there was a slight drizzle outside this morning, Lucy put on her new light coloured flannel trousers. She had bought them just last week in a sale in town. She wanted to try them out today. The forecast was for sunshine later - well that's what the man said on the radio weather report last night. Tonight, she would go straight out from work so she wanted to be dressed for the occasion. It was just like the thing; for halfway done the road suddenly the rain came on. She was hopeful though: "It will come to nothing," she kept telling her self, as she hurried on.

However, when she got to the bus stop, she noticed that her high heel shoes had kicked up little specks of dirty water from the street, and when she turned round she noticed that the back of her new light coloured trousers looked terrible. "It's going to be one of those days!" she screamed: "I can tell!"

Lucy, after asking the girl at the bus stop what time the next bus was due dashed home and quickly changed into her usual dark office suit. Her mother, as she watched her change, said scornfully, "Oh, you don't put on crème coloured trousers at this time of the year."

Lucy tried to smile, but she was annoyed: for time was against her now. In a resolute manner she quickly changed, and all things considered it didn't seem too bad, and she made her way along to the bus stop again. Incredibly, when she got to the bottom of the road she noticed a bus coming along the familiar treelined street.

Just as she stuck her hand out, Lucy realised that she had forgotten to take her weekly travel pass out of her trouser pocket. She stopped running and turned round and screamed, "It's going to be one of those days - I can tell!" and headed back up the road again to retrieve it.

Lucy usually had one cracker of a day, every year, when just about everything that could go wrong, went wrong - well this looked like the day. When she got to the library, she went straight up the stairs and into the Learning Centre on level two. As she pushed the glass doors open, Lucy glanced up at the clock, and noticed that she was about twenty minutes late. Thankfully, no one said anything. It was Friday and everyone seemed to be relaxed and in a good mood, awaiting the weekend, looking forward to spending time with their families, friends and loved ones. All the students were now booked in by this time, and using their computers. The man who checked the temperature of the rooms in the library was wandering about as usual staring into his little hand held device. People were coming and going quietly from department to department; everything seemed quite normal. The Technophobe as usual was there peering into his terminal like a man possessed. Yes, as far as she could see it looked like another normal day at the library.

Lucy sat down at her desk and prepared herself for another day at the office. And you know all things considered a few hours later things seemed to be moving along quite nicely. Without any real problems to deal with, Lucy thought to herself, "Yes, the day seems to be going quite quickly, goodness me I'll soon be finished and out of here."

Jack came past and echoed her thoughts, "It's been quite a quick day - don't you think Lucy."

"Roll on the weekend!" Lucy shouted back.

At 4 30, as usual Lucy was relieved in the Learning Centre. Her shift was all but over. She would go to the toilet, fix her hair, then head out and meet the girls for a drink in town. The weekend looked promising, so feeling quite relaxed she wandered out of the Learning Centre into the corridor and lazily pressed the small square metal button on the landing for the lift. She wanted to go to level four. The ladies toilet there was in better condition than the other floors: for they had not long been refurbished.

As she patiently waited for the lift to arrive, Lucy hummed a little ditty to herself, the one that Kolanski liked about the Red Red Rose. Suddenly, the doors opened and seeing no one there occupying the lift she danced inside. With nothing much to do she paused, tapped her foot and, as she was in the habit of doing when alone, she just stared into an imaginary world for a moment or two. Today, for some reason, Lucy seemed to inhabit a time when she was not forgotten about: a time when she was popular, well known, liked by both men and women, and could love everyone. She remembered not so long ago how Jenny and Gina would come to her house and dance about in her bedroom to the early hours of the morning

to the music playing on her computer. Suddenly, she noticed that someone had left the special silver key in the lift. Yes, there it was, the little silver key dangling there by the metal box beside the emergency phone in the lift. She had seen managers, and others, using this little key many times before, unlocking the unit before departing up to the mysterious 6th floor. Lucy knew that turning the silver key would activate the lift to go to the secret floor where the workers were not allowed to go.

In typical Lucy Lovelock fashion, she tapped her foot on the metal looking floor of the lift, and this time as she did so she said to herself: "I think I will take a look up there and see what is going on."

As soon as Lucy pressed the square number six in the little panel, the lift seemed to race away, and for a crazy second she thought it would never stop, and it would end up going through the roof of the building. Then all of a sudden it came to a stop.

When Lucy got out of the lift on the sixth floor, she immediately heard people talking, and by the sound of their voices they were just about to come round the corner. In a panic, Lucy pushed the first door open that she could see. The door was situated directly opposite the lift on the corridor. She quickly walked inside. With her heart pumping and her knees trembling, Lucy reassured herself, "I can always say that I am lost if someone finds me in here." Her crazy mind then raced ahead of her: "Remember, I'm the new girl, I can say anything: I got scared; l got lost; I just wanted to hide away." Then in typical Lucy Lovelock fashion she reassured herself. "What can they do to me anyway - all they can do is sack me if they find me in here."

Then for some unknown reason in a moment of terror she panicked. Naturally, when she heard all the voices in the corridor getting louder, she reckoned they were heading into the room where she was now standing. As if frozen in time, she stood still in the middle of the dark room and completely forgot where she was. At that moment nothing inside of her, or outside of her, seemed to exist. Mercifully, she noticed some light coming in through the Venetian blinds, falling onto the gray carpeted floor in front of her. A car went by outside, and the noise of the traffic seemed to calm her before it faded away again. Suddenly, she heard someone shouting to someone on the street. In a strangled tone, the voice repeated again and again: "Hey wait for me! I'm coming! I'm coming!"

"What can I do?" wondered Lucy to herself, as she tapped her foot against the floor.

Lucy sensed the room she was in was quite large and, although dark, she noticed a cupboard like an old-fashioned wardrobe opposite from where she now stood.

"Is that the wardrobe that will take me to the Lion, and the Witch…"

For some reason she thought about another book: "The character Maple in the book *Wild Ginger*, by Anchee Min, hid in a cupboard and watched her friend with her lover." Lucy's mind raced as she walked towards it. "They won't kill me if they catch me in here - will they?"

When she opened the cupboard door, she was glad to find that there was nothing inside of it, and there was only one shelf and it was high up near the top. Lucy crouched down and like some miracle after she shut the door, she found that one eye could peer out through a large black keyhole, back out into the room from where she had once stood. She heard voices again, then suddenly the door opened. Nothing much happened. In the dark some weird shapes move around inside the room, then she heard some people laughing.

When the light in the room was eventually switched on, Lucy could not believe her eyes: for the characters in the room were all dressed up in fancy religious costumes, some in pontifical robes, others in religious gowns. There was a new face there in the room. She thought she had seen her before somewhere, but where? She was a large woman with a pink face. "It must be the Piggy."

This woman was dressed in a long black robe. She looked odd, like a grown up baby. Her face hardly had any experience of life in it, yet she seemed to command the people around her with great ease. Lucy held her breath. And as they all came into the room, one by one, they all started dancing, cheering and singing. At the front of this weird procession, she made out the security man - the one with the scar on his face who walked about the library like a bovver boy. He was dressed up like a priest, and was now standing guard at the door of the room she was hiding in. He looked as if he was an important part of this mock religious ceremony. Just then, a terrible feeling came over Lucy. She remembered another book she had read; it was about the slave trade in Serbia. In the book, she remembered how some young women had been captured, then taken to a house and there the gangsters did all sorts of things to them. What would she do if caught: comply with the evildoers' demands, or face death like so many brave souls before her. In the story she remembered one of the girls had fought bravely to the end, but eventually she was taken outside and told to dig her own grave, then they killed her.

The man with the scar on his face certainly had drug connections. At that moment, he stepped forward, turned to the Piggy and said, "Ms Girvan," and ushered her forward.

With her own eyes she could see how the Piggy was behind everything. She was the one who controlled the agenda inside the library, even Ms Cyanide. Lucy could see someone on all fours, and someone sitting on top of them. "It's Daffy," she screamed to herself, when she noticed who the man on the floor, on all fours, was. "And the someone on his back, who is that? God it's Ms Cyanide!"

The Piggy by now was standing in the middle of the crowd in a long gown not saying very much. Presently, Ms Cyanide got off Daffy's back and stood up; she walked forward a few paces, and as she did so she dusted herself down. There was no change in her attitude. Lucy noticed how Ms Cyanide looked around the room in the same snooty manner as she did when she visited the workers in the Learning Centre.

Lucy could see the Deaf Beetle at the back of them looking lost, as usual. She was holding onto an old fashioned heavy chair. The Deaf Beatle was watching the Piggy closely. The Piggy was still in the middle of the room standing there looking on sternly. Even though the Deaf Beetle had both hands on the chair she was struggling to hold onto it. The chair looked very heavy and ornate. On second thoughts, the chair looked like an antique, the kind you see in offices and doorways in the city centre where rich corporate clients are found.

The other strange thing about it was that when eventually the Deaf Beetle brought the chair forward to the middle of the room, Lucy noticed there had been a large hole cut out of it on the seat part. Strangely, it was like the shape of the keyhole she was now peering through. The heavy chair she could see had strange designs on its legs: tiger's heads, and other such wild beasts.

The Deaf Beetle continued to struggle with the chair but, after a few minutes, she put it down right in front of the cupboard where Lucy was hiding. Lucy would have a front seat view of the ceremony.
Someone in the room started singing:"Te Deum laudamus…"

Then the Piggy was asked to sit down on the high chair in the middle of the strange bare room. When seated Lucy noticed that her legs hardly touched the ground, and she nearly laughed out loud. Presently, they all stood in a line in front of the Piggy and, one by one as they approached the chair, they all put their hands under it, and up inside her garment and felt her genitals. And as they did this, they declared: "Habet duos testiculos et bene pendentes."

The Piggy was presently stripped of her quirky gown and dressed in a new pontifical outfit. This new gown was handed to her by the Deaf Beetle. When all was done she looked very much like the Pope. After this, Daffy crowned her with a miter, and the Deaf Beetle placed gilded slippers on her tiny feet. Ms Cyanide just stood staring at the wall. Lucy could hardly believe her eyes. In fact, it was amazing that she took in all the mundane facts around the room. She noted the trunk at the left hand side of the room, next to the door, "This must be where all these costumes are kept," she muttered under her breath.

Every part of the Piggy's body, that was open, was adored and honoured: her hands were kissed, as were other parts of her body. Suddenly, Daffy turned as if to address a crowd and proclaimed, in a very curious voice, "I announce to you with great joy we have a new Pope! Respond deo gratias!" he shouted.

While seated the Piggy was then given a ring, a golden encrusted stole and, when a staff was placed in her hand, she appeared ready to rule the world. Someone put a red belt around her waist that had precious stones in it. Then Ms Cyanide handed her a Rod to hold on to. Three times they sang: "Pater sancte, sic transit gloria mundi."

The Piggy was then furthermore kissed and adorned. "He must be well hung," laughed the bovver boy, as he went forward and kissed her hand.

The Deaf Beetle then read something from a book in Latin. Lucy couldn't understand it at all, but she listened all the same. As the Piggy got up off her stone throne, she was greeted with enthusiastic applause by the little crowd around her, and flowers were thrown at her feet.

After the ceremony, the assembled group chatted for a time, then the lights went out, and everyone trudged outside. Lucy breathed a huge sigh of relief, and immediately she glanced at her watch, "I will wait five minutes, then I will get out of here."

She could not see her watch face though, for it was dark inside the cupboard. However, she new it must be getting on near five o'clock. Her legs hurt, she had been crouched down here for at least 15 minutes now. Lucy needed to stand up. She needed to pee. She needed to see natural light again, and talk to people. In a child like voice, she told herself, "I have to get out of hear, before they shut the library at five o'clock."

So when all was quiet, Lucy slowly opened the cupboard door, and stumbled back out into the strange room on the sixth floor of the main library in town. She heard a voice from outside again. It was someone far-

away on the phone, "Right, remember the meeting next Monday, don't forget the time now…"

Even though the blinds were drawn some light still came in from the street, and it helped her find her way to the door. Just before opening it, she noticed the clock on the wall. It was ten to five. "Gosh the library shuts in ten minutes!"

She would need to get to the lift and go downstairs quickly, and quietly, before they locked the library up for the night. Even though she still had the silver key in her hand to operate the lift, she knew that once inside the lift she was safe: for no one would know where she had been. She could always blame the lift, or someone who had been in it, for transporting her to the sixth floor.

On the landing, she pressed the button, and then went quickly back inside the room and hid behind the door. The plan was that when the bell rang she would peep out through the door, and if no one was there dash outside and into the vacant lift.

"If there is someone in it, I can always wait till they have gone," Lucy told herself.

When the lift mercifully arrived, the bell sounded so loud that Lucy thought everyone in the whole library would hear it. She quickly peeped outside the door, and with no one there she jumped inside.

Down on the ground floor, she walked past the security guard. She noticed it was the side kick of Scarface who was on duty tonight, the one with the dirty face. Over in the rest area, Lucy then noticed the man with the scar on his face standing there, "He must have changed quickly," she thought to herself.

He was leaning up against the main counter leering at all the students as they made there way outside the library. When he spotted Lucy, in his usual twisted voice, he shouted over to her: "You're late! You are usually the first one out of the building!"

His voice was so cold that she thought for a moment that it was the statue bust beside him that had spoken to her.

Lucy smiled at him and not to draw attention to herself she said, "Well, thank God it's Friday, that's all I can say," and she left the library.

7

It is fair to say that over the last few months Jenny's heart had become hardened to men. As she picked up her coffee cup outside the cafe bar, it came as no surprise to anyone when she said: "Do you know at the bus stop this morning a man let me go in front of him and onto the bus." And after looking at Kolanski for a few odd seconds, she teased him, "They just want to look at your bum."

Kolanski laughed: "You are a hard ticket, Jenny."

Luxurious John, who had not long been divorced, had recently moved in with Tom Kolanski. Kolanski stayed on the doorstep of the city, in an old-fashioned red sandstone tenement. Apparently, the boys were having such great fun together; they were like two schoolboys playing pranks on each other. It had even been reported within the circle that Luxurious John read Kolanski to sleep at night, and in the morning he made him breakfast.

Jenny Penny now seeing Kolanski quite relaxed took the opportunity to quiz him about this, "Is this true Kolanski, you have a butler now at the flat?"

Kolanski, with a wink and a furtive smile, replied, "Not a lot to ask, my dear, as a precondition for living with me - rent free - is it."

Apparently, last week Luxurious John had met Kolanski's neighbour on the stair, and of course naturally he mentioned this to Kolanski the same evening: "She was quite friendly to me, you know," he told him.

This was all that was needed, Kolanski, the very next day, sent a letter through her letterbox: *"I am writing to you to thank you, for you were so kind and*

charming to me yesterday, when we met on the stair. And I look forward to seeing you again sometime in the future. Please call me Lucky John - everyone does."

Then again the next day another letter followed: *"I saw you again yesterday on the stair, but sadly didn't get a chance to say hello. I must tell you I love to paint. Tom says I am just like Henry Moore, for you know, I can tell a woman by the shape of her legs, from twenty yards away. And I have got to say to you - you have lovely legs, especially your calf muscles. Would you like to come over sometime and model for me. I love figure drawing. I will keep the flat nice and warm for you, so when Tom is out you won't get too cold. Hear from you soon, Lucky John.*

Lucy wanted to ask Kolanski about the ceremony she had just witnessed, but she knew that no one would believe her. When the conversation drifted to religion, she got her chance. Out of the blue, she said: "Has a woman ever been elected as Pope?"

Kolanski said, as if he were a presenter on a game show: "Yes, I do believe the first story about St Joan appeared around 1250; it became well known in the 1300."

Gina cut him off: "Are you telling me that a woman is supposed to have occupied the throne of St Peter's?"

"Yes," said Kolanski coldly. "It is true: to avoid electing another woman as pope, as fable has it, as soon as the elected one is seated on the throne the deacons touch his, or her, genitals. And this story - the hands up the kilt - has become part of an oral tradition. Of course, when the papacy left Rome for Avignon, a lot of the Roman rites and customs disappeared. If my memory serves me right the story about St. Joan surfaces again around 1379. And this is where it was recorded namely: 'To avoid such an error today, as soon as the elected pope is seated on the throne of St Peter, the least of the deacon's touch his genitals as he is seated on a chair pierced to that effect.' "

Jenny Penny thinking it was all a great joke, cried out "All right, Kolanski, we get the picture!"

"And to this day ladies that is the way the Romans confirm the sex of their new Pope: they stick their hands up through a stone throne and tickle his testicles."

Everyone laughed, then Gina Cappuccino roared: "How do they do that in a ceremony, Kolanski?"

"As I have indicated they have a special chair, my dear, that is pieced to that effect," Kolanski repeated again.

So this was what the ceremony was all about: going through their rituals. Lucy could hardly believe that there was such a group of people op-

erating inside the library. She would have to take care for they could be dangerous. If she exposed them there was no telling what they could do.

In the old days, Luxurious John had worked as a journalist for one of the main newspapers in town, "Before they employed students," was his famous quote. After he had been made redundant, he started writing novels. He had to date written around 8 books, and now lived off his earnings.

"My latest novel is called *Three sides to a story*," he told the girls outside the cafe bar, "should be out next month."

He and Tom Kolanski had been friends since high school days. Lucy had met him a few times before. Tom maintained that he had a soap fetish, whatever that was. The strangest thing that Lucy had heard about him was that he washed out the inside of food cans, before putting them in the bin. 'I mean who washes out a can of beans, before putting it in the bin!' her mother screamed at her, after she had told her this.

"Strange, but nice," was Lucy's opinion.

Luxurious John was dressed today in a herringbone jacket, light coloured flannels, and he had thrown a green Paisley pattern scarf around his neck. He was always smart. "Luxurious John has style oozing out of him, or something oozing out of him," as his mate Tom Kolanski would often remind Lucy.

Luxurious John carried around with him a small silver cigarette case, and when outside in the cafe bar, he would gently open it, and offer someone a cigarette. Then after doing this, he would snap it shut again, nearly taking their fingers off. He would usually smile at them no matter if they took one or not. This was a sign that Luxurious John was not contained by the state: for they had banned smoking in public places, and it was now generally frowned upon within society. However, thankfully for smokers it was still permitted outside on the street. They say that even in winter time you could see Luxurious John in the city centre outside his favourite cafe bar sitting there all alone smoking.

Just back from Sweden, John told Kolanski. "The women there were just perfect," he said imitating their accent.

John thought the men very lonely too, "I met with one though and we had some fun," he said with a sad smile.

"Yes, I have heard it said that the Swedish women are beautiful, but all the men look gay," interrupted Jenny Penny.

"There something in that," said Lucky John, with a twinkle now in his eye.

"Do you know that I had a strange dream the first night I was there; I guess I must have been studying their features too much. Anyway, I had

this dream about a beautiful woman from Lapland. She was calling to me to come to her. 'Come to me!' she shouted. 'I have made the bed for you. But you must beware of the wild dogs in the wilderness; they resemble people you have seen before on the street.' "

No one said anything as Luxurious John paused, and tidied his Paisley pattern scarf. Gina looked down at her coffee cup, then she smiled at Lucy as if telling her not to say anything until he had finished his story.

When no one said anything, Lucky John went on: "You should go Ms Lovelock you would like it there."

John was also an inventor. In fact, he had just recently developed a software package for a computer company. Later on when things got dull he told his friends all about it: "It plugs into the USB port, and via a remote control you can access your TV screen with it. The software scans the picture and can recreate other characters around it, or it can keep the faces of the actors and broadcasters, and change their outfits. For example, it can make the news reader naked and do all sorts of funny things to him or her."

Everyone thought that John was onto a winner with this invention: for people were really fed up being manipulated by the media. It was really good when you could escape their control. Yes, this was a legitimate way of making fun of the people who were trying to control the viewers with depressing news reports about poverty, war and famine, terrifying court cases, murders, and all the stuff people really didn't want to hear.

"To rid yourself of all the things you do not want to hear, or see, just select a program and the computer will do the rest for you. TV will soon be rendered useless: for the consumer is now in charge of the pictures on the screen. The viewer will now be able to manipulate the images on the TV screen to what he or she, wants to see. There is also a program to change the sound if you don't like what you are hearing," John added.

He was not stopping there, Lucky John was pressing ahead with another invention. "I am now developing cut and paste scenery from old films, so that you can import them directly into your own homemade films and movies. The idea is that you will be able to import the images you want to use, with you as the central character. For everything that is digital can be cut, copied, and pasted, back into the live picture."

Lucy was not sure what he meant, so she asked him: "So if I want I can have the exact backdrop of the film, from say, *The Sound of Music,* and me in the middle there singing: *The hills are alive with the sound of music....*"

"Exactly, Ms Lovelock."

Lucky John looked across at his friend Tom and beamed, "Yes, I have just finished my second novel."

"What's it about?" asked Jenny Penny interrupting in a coy girlish voice.

Kolanski smirked and looked at Luxurious John again. "Well come on then, Lucky John."

"It's about getting women back into the kitchen, and away from the pub."

The three girls all laughed.: "Come on John, you don't think anyone really will take you seriously!"

"Well, it was an improvement on the last proposal," lamented Tom Kolanski.

"It appears to me ladies that today women want a career, a man, a baby, and then a divorce, and so it goes on."

Kolanski roared with laughter before adding, "Yes, I agree, John, women are so unhappy in the world today; I wonder what we can do to help them."

Luxurious John's last book was titled *Mission to Mars*. It was a sci-fi thriller, published by a large consortium in London. Apparently, he had gone to the London bookfair a few years ago where he had met a commissioning editor who had, as he put it, taken a fancy to him. "That's the way it is done in the industry," he admitted to Lucy.

When she heard him say this, Lucy thought to herself, "I should tell the local author."

8

There was to be a bookfair next week and every one at the library was quite excited. Lucy had picked up a copy of the brochure and had read with interest: 'Authors from all over the world will be appearing at the library, and all sorts of interesting people, from the world of literature will be at the bookfair.'

The management had instructed the staff to wear black, for that they reckoned was the colour of the city. Lucy wondered why the management had chosen the colour black to promote the fair. "Why do they see the city as black, when everyone knows it is gray."

On the day of the fair Lucy, however, looked out a black silk shirt that she had only ever worn once.

"Are you going to a funeral?" her mother asked her, when she saw her walk into the room that morning.

"Your not far wrong there," replied Lucy laughing.

For some unknown reason the management at the library had banned the local author, and invited only the cognoscenti from the other side of the country, as well as one or two well known names from England. The local author who came into the library every day was furious; he had written to the Arts Council, and had sent a copy of the letter to the staff at the library. He asked the staff to pray for the management at the library: for as he put it: 'They are evildoers up to no good!'

The letter was circulated round the Learning Centre. Lucy read it after it had done its rounds: Evil Spirit at the library - act now

Dear Friends,

The Central Library, as you know, buys for the rest of the libraries: I believe there are now some 30 branches in total. However, there has been an embargo placed on my titles at the library. One of my titles in fact is about a Scottish soldier who fought during the Second World War. I had first hand material for this book, but the evildoers at the library have banned it. Last year, I had to pull up the library manager as regards the November celebrations for the old soldiers. As you know no respect was shown to them on that day at the central library: the staff did not wear poppies, there was no minute's silence, there was no books on special display about the two World Wars, in any of the libraries during the anniversary.

Needless to say, when they organised the bookfair this year, they did not contact me. Please make it plain to the people who run the library that embargoes, unemployment, discrimination, ignorance, and hate, are the devil's works. I urge you, the staff, to pray so that the evil spirit, that has taken hold of the people who run the central library in town, is chased away. I hope and pray that a harmonious attitude returns, and that all comers in the future, no matter there ethnic background, or status, are invited to take part at the bookfair within our city.

"He was not far wrong about the people who run the library," thought Lucy, after she had read his letter.

On the day of the bookfair, there she was, The Deaf Beetle, as usual in her black outfit standing at the counter. Today, she was counting the people coming into the library by clicking a small silver counter in her hand. Some people for some reason had gathered at the counter before going in through the security barrier. Lucy could tell by the Deaf Beetle's face she was not best pleased and wasn't sure if she should count them now or later.

"Something's never change," thought Lucy, as she laughed at the Deaf Beetle.

She noticed that today, due to the bookfair, the Deaf Beatle looked happy to see her; she even gave Lucy a little nod as she entered the main reception area of the library. Lucy in her usual good mood smiled over at her, and then said, "Good morning."

As Lucy waited for the lift she overheard two women, behind the counter talking. She could not see their faces for they had their back's turned towards her. It looked as if they had met at the Bookfair today.

"Danny was found dead in his house last night. We all know he suffered over the years." There was a pause, then the same voice continued: "The evil one who promotes drugs and everything else that interferes with the mind can no longer annoy him. I remember him saying to me, 'I only want to be with good people.' Poor Danny!"

"It's sad." echoed the other voice.

"You know, I went to see him recently, and after we had visited his local pub, he took me to where he hung out; it was in a high rise flat somewhere near Sighthill. The funny thing he was telling me was that when you are on heroin you don't have much time for alcohol. I guess that was the reason why Danny had only a soft drink in the pub with me. Well, after the hit he was 'Spun Out', I think that is the term he used for it, drifting up and down, in and out of consciousness. God it was quite a scene…"

There was a pause in the conversation as if the images were too hard for her to bear. Then the same voice went on again: "People will continue to besmirch his name, even though he is not here to defend himself. I remember him saying to me: 'I only want to be with good people'. I mourned for him you know, Cathy. He had a big appetite for life, and I know he loved getting 'out of it', as they say, but I liked him. The reason is simple: I felt his pain; I felt his loneliness. I remember singing the lines of a song to him: '*Who can bear to be forgotten*,' and I remember him replying to me in his usual good hearted way, 'I can. I don't want to be remembered,' And it did make me wonder, you know, what happens to the soul when it migrates, how something is left here, even if others do not want it to be remembered, and here it stays. Well, alas it's an evil world, but I liked him, he was a goodhearted man was Danny."

A few weeks after this, Lucy was chosen to go to the London Bookfair to represent the library. Even though no one else wanted to go Lucy was delighted. When the letter came through the post inviting her to represent the library, she smiled to herself. It was just what the doctor ordered: a trip away for a few days.

That morning, Lucy took a shower and washed her hair, then she packed a few things into a small bag. She always travelled light. When she got home from work she felt quite relaxed, ahead of the game so to speak. Finally, all alone she sat down for her evening meal. Her mother phoned her at six o'clock, and wished her good luck. "I am staying over tonight, with you know who," she told her, as if she was the one going away on a long trip.

It was left to gran to come round and make up some sandwiches for her. Gran always made the sandwiches up no matter who was going away. She didn't stay too long, she just said to Lucy, "Have a good trip, my dear. I have to get back and look after papa."

Lucy left the house at half past nine in the evening; she had to get the midnight train to London. She switched everything off in the house before leaving; she knew of course her mother had her own key if she wanted to

return to the house during the night. Thankfully, the bus was on time at the bottom of the road. Once seated inside, Lucy felt quite excited. She stared out of the window, and wondered to herself what adventures awaited her on the long journey to and from London.

"Maybe I will meet someone interesting at the fair, an author, a poet, a publishing tycoon…"

The late dark winter's night, outside the bus, with its gray shops and houses went by her like ghost figures heading towards their own destination, as if being pulled back into the past, or to some transcendental realm far far away. Tonight, they really did seem to Lucy to be from another world, another time, another place. The night streets she thought looked bizarre, like something out a frozen world lost forever in time and space. Lucy soon drifted back into the bus with more mundane thoughts to chew over, like what would she say to the people at the fair. Thankfully, there was hardly any traffic, and in no time at all the bus drew near to the city centre. In fact, it only stopped once at the gates at the beginning of Victoria Road to pick up a rough looking young man, carrying a bottle of wine in his hand. He sat down beside someone not far away from her, and he started talking to the other lad right away: "Did you hear Danny was found dead in his flat a few days ago?"

Immediately, she remembered the two women at the library and the things they said about him: "People will continue to besmirch his name even though he is not here to defend himself. I remember him saying to me: 'I only want to be with good people'. I mourned for him you know Cathy. He had a big appetite for life, and I know he loved getting 'out of it', as they say, but I liked him. The reason is simple: I felt his pain, I felt his loneliness. I remember singing the lines of a song to him: '*Who can bear to be forgotten*,' and I remember him replying to me in his usual good hearted way, 'I can. I don't want to be remembered,' And it did make me wonder, you know, what happens to the soul when it migrates, how something is left here, even if others do not want it to be remembered, and here it stays. Well, alas it's an evil world, but I liked him, he was a goodhearted man was Danny."

She wondered if they were talking about the same man. Lucy listened to the voice of the young man who had come onto the bus carrying a bottle of wine, to see if there were any other clues as to who the man named Danny was. However, the conversation soon changed and the lads went on to talk about European football, and whatever relationship they had had with man named Danny seem to fade away into the mysterious dark night again.

When she got in to the city centre she got off the bus, half way along St. Vincent Street, and walked towards the train station. The night train to London was standing there at platform number 1. This was a new way to travel for Lucy: travelling through the night from station to station. It seemed unreal to her. And as she walked on towards the train, Lucy let go of the present and embraced the future. She imagined meeting new friends, foreigners, lost souls, people in transit looking for work. Everyone from around the globe with one thing in common: everyone searching for love. Half way along the platform, she was met by a young lady in a long red coat, box hat and ponytail. When she got close to her, the young lady in the ponytail smiled at Lucy, and asked her name. Looking down at the paper in her hand she said politely, "What berth number do you have?"

Then after looking at Lucy's ticket, she ticked something off on the board in front of her. In a kind voice, she then asked Lucy, "Would you like coffee or tea, in the morning?"

"Tea." said Lucy.

Lucy was quite excited now, so much so that as soon as she entered the night train she completely forgot her berth number. Halfway along the sleeping compartment, she had to go into her bag again and locate her ticket. When she found it, she sighed, "Ah, lucky 13, now all I have to do is find where it is."

Inside the little compartment, Lucy sat down on the bottom bunk. And when she looked up she naturally wondered to herself who would be sleeping on the top bunk, "God, what if it's a maniac, a drunkard, a drug user?"

It was so like Lucy Lovelock to cheer herself up immediately by thinking the opposite: "What if it is a good looking young man who is lonely, full of love and passion, who all his life has wanted to come and worship at the Lucy Lovelock fountain."

Lucy remembered that she had ticked the box F for female in the form on the computer, and she relaxed. The book she had brought along with her for the journey had been a present from Kolanski. He had bought it for her last Christmas; it was about Chairman Mao. She put it under her pillow, paused for a moment, then she bowed her head and said a little prayer. It was during this prayer that she heard a noise, a crack, a rustle, something was moving somewhere near her. When she opened her eyes again she noticed the adjoining door was now open. Suddenly, she heard a man's voice say, "Oh, Sorry". Then the adjoining door slowly shut again.

Lucy laughed, as if the joke had been played on her from another world. She looked around the small sleeping berth, pulled a face and just

smiled to herself. No one came to occupy the top bunk, and when the train pulled out of the station, Lucy got undressed and slipped under the thin white duvet.

It was then that she noticed that the adjoining door had not been locked on her side. She listened for a moment or two, for she could hear someone still moving around next door inside the other berth. Lucy yawned, then calmly stretched out her hand and gently locked the door on her side. "Just in case he doesn't turn out to be the boy next door," she said to herself with a smile, and fell fast asleep.

Lucy arrived in London early in the morning, so she had plenty of time to prepare herself inside her sleeping berth for the bookfair. Once inside Euston station, she bought a day pass so that she could use the bus and the underground, then she headed immediately for Piccadily. Having been to London before with Gina, she knew there would be something open at this time in the morning, and she could get a coffee and something to eat there.

The bookfair in Earls Court was huge; there were stalls everywhere. When she entered the fair she could see publishers from every country in the world were here. One country was even the special guest of honour at the London bookfair. There was something fantastic about it; money seemed no object to the people who had taken stalls at the fair. However, there was something else too, something malignant was in the air.

"Where there is money, there is corruption, as Tom Kolanski would say," thought Lucy.

Lucy was told by Ms Cyanide that she should go round all the main stalls, and leave some promotional cards as regards the library services on their tables. At the main information desk, just inside the auditorium, she picked up a large book, and for a time she just stared at the back of it at the index page. As she checked the names of the companies, she got some understanding from the Official Directory, as to where the companies came from by the letters after their web domain names. Looking at the plan on the wall inside the bookfair, the main publishers seemed to be grouped right at the front of the hall. They obviously paid for this privilege. The first stall she approached had a huge sign above it in red letters: Smith and & Co. There were pictures of some high flying authors decked here and there on the walls, and lots of photographs of books. The authors all looked to her the same: erudite, boozy and sexless.

As Lucy walked inside the stall a woman with a happy red face looked at her. Presently, she introduced herself as Mrs Shoe.

"Quite a strange name," Lucy thought, as she smiled at her. "Lucy Lovelock."

Mrs Shoe listened to everything Lucy had to say to her. h
However, the fascinating thing for Lucy was that, just like some of the people who worked at the library, the words did not seem to penetrate her being. They seemed to disappear before her soul could catch them and digest them. For some odd reason, she did not want to hear the words on offer. The inner and the outer were very different indeed. The outer seemed pleasant, nice, good even, but the inner seemed something else.

Lucy did not like Mrs Shoe, there was something about her: a beautiful contradiction. She hated people not from her class - yes that was it. It was plain to see that books and writers to her meant money and prestige, and money and prestige meant only one thing to her: class. She was a member of that elite bunch of people who serve the upper class with distinction. Lucy stared over at the Chance Publishing Company stall, apposite from where she now stood, "Goodness me it's a huge fair," she sighed to herself trying to chase her wayward thoughts away.

As if someone had put their finger up her bottom, Mrs Shoe made a funny face at Lucy and beamed, "Yes, it is, isn't it."

Lucy could see that whoever came to the stall of Smith and & Co, to look at their titles would get the same kind of treatment from Mrs Shoe. She would be very pleasant, but they would get nothing from her unless they were connected to Eton, or Cambridge, or some other elite institution.

Lucy before departing looked around at all the titles again inside the stall of Smith & Co. and out of the corner of her eye she spotted a familiar figure. It was the author who went to the local library where she worked. He was a strange one, right enough. No wonder some of the staff called him 'Moonman'. He was no doubt at the fair promoting his titles. Just at that moment, he came straight into the stall of Smith & Co, and went right up to Mrs Shoe: "You do nothing to help unemployed writers. You should be ashamed of yourself. You should lift the embargo and start trading with ordinary people - not just well known agents and cronies. Your company is only interested in the corporate world. You are a disgrace…"

It was when she heard the word 'corporate' that Lucy started to understand how large companies only trade with each other corporate companies: thus new writers, and moreover their ideas, get blocked, and their works do not get to the public via that route. She didn't want to stay and listen to the argument, she had heard him arguing before in the library many times, so over she went to the Chance Publishing Company stall to

see Harry, or was it Danny, she couldn't remember the name that was in the brochure - anyway she would soon find out.

The Chance Publishing Company had three young girls all about Lucy's age there. They were sitting at the reception desk chatting to each other. She could see they were all dying to do something. And when they saw Lucy, approaching their stall, they all pounced on her as if she had some vital information that they must have. She ended up speaking to a nice red headed girl, fresh faced, and just out of high school. After talking about the bookfair, she whined sympathetically: "Oh, Danny is terribly busy at the moment; he has got appointments all day. Why not come back later? In about an hour."

Lucy after wandering around the bookfair walked over to another stall, and there she met a man named Mr Bark. The people at the bookfair had strange names indeed. She could see he was not much older than she was, though he acted and dressed like a middle-aged man. He outwardly seemed pleased to see her, but Lucy could tell that he was afraid of the system in which he operated. And as she looked at some of the books inside his stall, she again felt an evil spirit hovering around inside the arena. "It wants to control people, for the love of money," she thought to herself.

Suddenly, the author from the local library appeared again and confronted Mr Bark. He told Mr Bark about the book he had written, about his grandfather who had fought in the war. Mr Bark again seemed on one level interested. However, on the other hand it was apparent that he could not care less. When the author reached the end of his story, Lucy noticed that Mr Bark looked nervous, and to get out of this predicament he babbled on about target figures, marketing strategies, and declining sales: "Oh, I don't think it is something we could do here in this publishing house."

After more thoughts on the subject, he ended up by repeating the famous phrase used by literary prostitutes: "Why not get yourself a copy of the *Writers and Artists* handbook, and find yourself an agent."

In life, as in the arts, it appeared to Lucy that it was always somebody else's problem. Lucy wondered what to do. She thought about going for a coffee and having something to eat, but she had second thoughts, "I guess, I had better do a few more calls, and introduce myself to a few more people who control the publishing world, before I leave the fair," she thought to herself.

Lucy arrived back at Glasgow Central station early the next morning on the first train from London. Although, she had slept quite well in her cabin she seemed different than the day before. She couldn't quite understand the change. And as she walked thorough the empty station, dragging

her little trolley case behind her, she really did believe that the reason would soon be revealed to her. She would head for Union Street, and take the bus home. Even though it had only been a short trip, it was as if she was now living in a different world. The city centre was strange so early in the morning: the bin men cleaning the streets, and the early travellers off to work moving by them. Everyone slowly walking towards their destination, as if they were all part of some new secret organisation. Lucy would go home, change, then go back into town, phone and meet the girls for a coffee. She was dying to tell them all about the trip.

9

As usual, the security man, when she got back to work on Tuesday, gazed at Lucy in a lascivious manner as she went in through the silver turnstile. "Something's never change," she thought to herself, as he leered at her.

Lucy skipped quickly up the stairs and into the Learning Centre, "The rugby player must be off today." This was apparent for as soon as she walked inside the centre, Lucy did not hear her bellowing at someone. "Time will soon pass," she told herself, and I will be out of here."

The Learning Centre slowly filled up and, about an hour later, as she sat there at her desk, it suddenly hit her again, "What a strange assortment of people they are who come to the library every day. I mean just look at them: foreign students, misfits, all sorts of weird and wonderful characters. They all look as if they have been to the charity shops again at the weekend to buy their clothes."

Out of the blue, the little dark mobile phone in the middle of the table rang. Then it went off again. Lucy picked it up; she heard nothing. However, just as she was about to put it down back inside its little battery charger, she heard someone say something. Even though it was a bad line she thought she recognised the voice.

"Listen I know that new girl Lucy Lovesick, or whatever her name is, has been up on the 6th floor, on Friday night; I checked the security cameras..."

"Deal with it," said the woman's voice, then the phone went dead.

When Lucy put down the phone, she looked around the Learning Centre; she didn't know what to think. Her first reaction was to forget it like a bad dream. Then it dawned on her who the voice of the man was: it

was that of the security guard, the bovver boy with the long scar on his face, and the woman's voice belonged to 'The Piggy' Ms Girvan.

Lucy would now have to watch herself. They may be kidding, but then again they may not be. The next time she saw the man with the scar on his face she would know. He couldn't hide anything from anyone, not even his evil thoughts.

As usual at eleven o'clock, Daffy came to relieve her so that she could go on her statutory half an hour break. He was an odd ball if ever there was one. It was the way he walked and talked. "Your morning shift is over," he said like a robot, as he waddled past her.

Just then, the technician came into the Learning Centre to fix a broken computer. When he spotted Daffy, he asked him which one it was that was: "Kaput," as he put it.

"Number 15, I believe," came the deadpan reply from the Duck.

Lucy watched Daffy waddle over towards the faulty terminal. She was surprised, for as he waddled over he started to sing an old fashion jazz tune, one that she liked, but could not quite remember the title of.

When he got near to the computer, he moved his hips as if he wanted to dance. This action recalled the image of Daffy at the ceremony dancing about like a lunatic. When the man did not follow him, Daffy said in a strange tone, stranded between hilarity and legality, "I think it is that one there, "and pointed to it.

The technician went over and bent down beside the tower, and after a few moments opened it up with a screwdriver. Lucy didn't want to leave without saying anything, so as she watched the technician open up the faulty terminal, for something to say she quipped, "Looks like a major piece of surgery to me."

Lucy knew that the world of technology had two sides to it: perfection and despair, and when the technician did not reply she did not add anything else, and got ready to walk away.

It seemed to be the way that when computers did not work, they threw all the hard work back on to the lap of the human being. And this upset most humans no end; for it made them once again use longhand and calculation. It is fair to say that most humans in the 21st century, over twenty-one, had forgotten how to do these kinds of things. After the technician had opened up the computer, he put his hand inside it and held onto something, and then after a struggle there was a crack and something gave way. He then went into his shoulder bag and brought out a shiny silver bag, opened it, and took out a new component. The technician then

pulled something else out of the circuit board, and presently inserted the new component inside it.

Right on cue, after he had fitted the new part, over came the Technophobe: "I don't know if you know this, but if you are having a problem with your computer I know a great web site…"

"Time to go," thought Lucy.

The morning went by quite quickly, and Lucy took her break at the usual time, eleven o'clock. Just as she was going down the stairs towards the canteen, she felt someone behind her. She turned round immediately and saw who it was. It was the tall security man with the scar on his face. He was accompanied by the other security man the one with the dirty face. Trying to make a joke of it, Scarface said in a loud voice, "Sneaking off early again, are we?"

Lucy wanted to ignore him, but she knew that this would only draw her closer to him, and into his dark web of deceit. In typical Lucy Lovelock fashion, she answered him quickly, "No bang on eleven," and she walked on.

Lucy tried to analyse the voice of Scarface as she walked away. The words seemed choked, strangled. And as they echoed in her mind she reckoned they came from a troubled being, someone who at every opportunity tries to weaken their opponent by the unseen threat of terror.

Lucy went home as usual at five o'clock that night. She felt tired, drained, and a little shaken, if truth be told. She liked going to bed early when she felt like this: fed up and tired of the world. Yes, it was time to hide away under the snow white duvet once more. Normally, at home she relaxed and forgot all about the people she worked with at the library by pretending they did not exist. She usually read for about half an hour. Tonight, she couldn't even be bothered to read the magazine that she had bought from the shop, near Central Station. At nine thirty, she popped round to see her gran, and it was when she got back she noticed that there was a note on the mantelpiece lying there from her mother. She got up off the chair quickly and read it: "I will be staying over tonight again with you know who."

Lucy immediately thought about the stray dog who came to visit her mother from time to time. She had not seen him for a while, "Well, that was no loss."

She had never been in his apartment. However, she could imagine her mother with him, the two of them with friends, everyone naked, watching sex films, drinking lots of alcohol, laughing and carrying on. They were up to something, she knew that much.

Lucy wondered what to do now that her mother was gone for the night. She wanted someone to talk to. She telephoned Jenny Penny, then Kolanski, but no one was answering their phones. She left messages here and there, but when no one phoned her back she gave up. After a cup of herbal tea and a Sicilian lemon muffin, she thought nothing else for it: "It's an early night for me."

Lucy didn't like sleeping naked. She liked big comfortable cotton men's pyjamas to sleep in. Without thinking about it she opened a new set. They had been bought for her as a Christmas present last year by Gina. As she took them out of her bottom drawer, she smiled to herself when she saw the old-fashioned Paisley pattern on them. And after twirling around the room a couple of times in them, she dived into bed and soon she fell fast asleep.

Out of a mysterious blue dark dream, something cracked. The foreign girl at the library who had just asked her something about a clothes shop in town faded away. Someone had stood on something and had broken it. Lucy tried to focus on the dream again to get back to sleep. But the person that she did not know in the dream was no longer there. Lucy sat up. Yes, something was up, something in the world around her, for a good reason, had dragged her back into the Lovelock bedroom. There was no doubt about it she was now here again in her room. Lucy yawned; she could hear the clock ticking by her bedside. Suddenly, there was a thud, "What was that?"

The world of the unconscious and the conscious suddenly streamed together in her sleepy mind, and the nightmare world of the former quickly inhabited the latter.

"Someone is downstairs! Someone is in the house!"

She turned on her sidelight, beside her bed, and read the time on the face of the little yellow travel clock: "3:30."

"Mum can't be back this early." Lucy thought. "No, mum would say something if she had broken a vase, or bottle, like, 'Oh hell! Who put that there?'

What should I do? Should I go downstairs, or should I just hide here under the blankets?"

Lucy in a flash got up and stood quite still in the semi dark room. In a comic manner, she pulled the cord tight around her pyjamas like a judo fighter, then pulled an angry face. She could almost see her funny face in the faraway mirror of the room.

"Right what's this all about, then?" she said to herself.

She heard a creaking sound, followed by footsteps on the stairs, "Someone is coming up the stairs, better not put the main light on."

She could hear someone breathing, then silence, then more footsteps, and creaking. She noticed her bedroom door was half closed. She quickly moved over and stood behind it. An empty bottle of wine that Jenny Penny had bought last month was still lying there behind the old fashioned writing desk. Lucy thought about the wild nights in her room with her friends Gina Cappuccino, and Jenny Penny, how they had experimented with video cameras and other things. Lucy slowly bent down and gently picked up the empty bottle. And as she did this she thought of some of the tough nuts in town, and how they growled before they attacked their victims.

"If he comes in here, I will give it to him over the head."

Standing quiet still she promised herself that just like the tough nuts in town she would shout something before attaching whoever it was that was coming up the stairs. "What should I shout?" she wondered?"

Newspaper reports of girls being kidnapped and imprisoned in the Balkan rushed through her mind again. She thought about the beautiful blonde girl she had read about who had refused to have sex with the gangster who had kidnapped her; she remembered that after abusing her a man had taken her outside and made her dig her own grave. "Funny how your mind thinks about these kinds of things at times like this," Lucy mocked herself.

"Yes, I will give it to him all right if he comes inside the Lovelock bedroom.

There was a deadly silence, and it seemed to go on forever; she could feel whoever it was coming forward, up the stairs, was getting closer.

"Who can it be?" she wondered.

Lucy remembered she had left the light on in the living room. Suddenly, her bedroom door was slowly pushed open; the creaking of leather shoes suddenly became silent. Then nothing seemed to happen. It was time to act. Lucy as soon as the face came into the room yelled, "Thunder!" and cracked the bottle over his head.

It was Scarface from the library, even though his face was now contorted in pain. She recognised him as his lethargic body fell back into the living room. And like a drunken man, he stumbled down the stairs holding his head as he went. Soon, he was down the stairs, and out of the open door of the house. Lucy walked calmly down and gently closed the door behind him.

"Well quite enough of that, thank you very much," she said calmly to herself.

In the madness, she suddenly realised that the bottle that she had hit him with was not broken and was still in her hand. She could hardly believe it, "Must have been a good year."

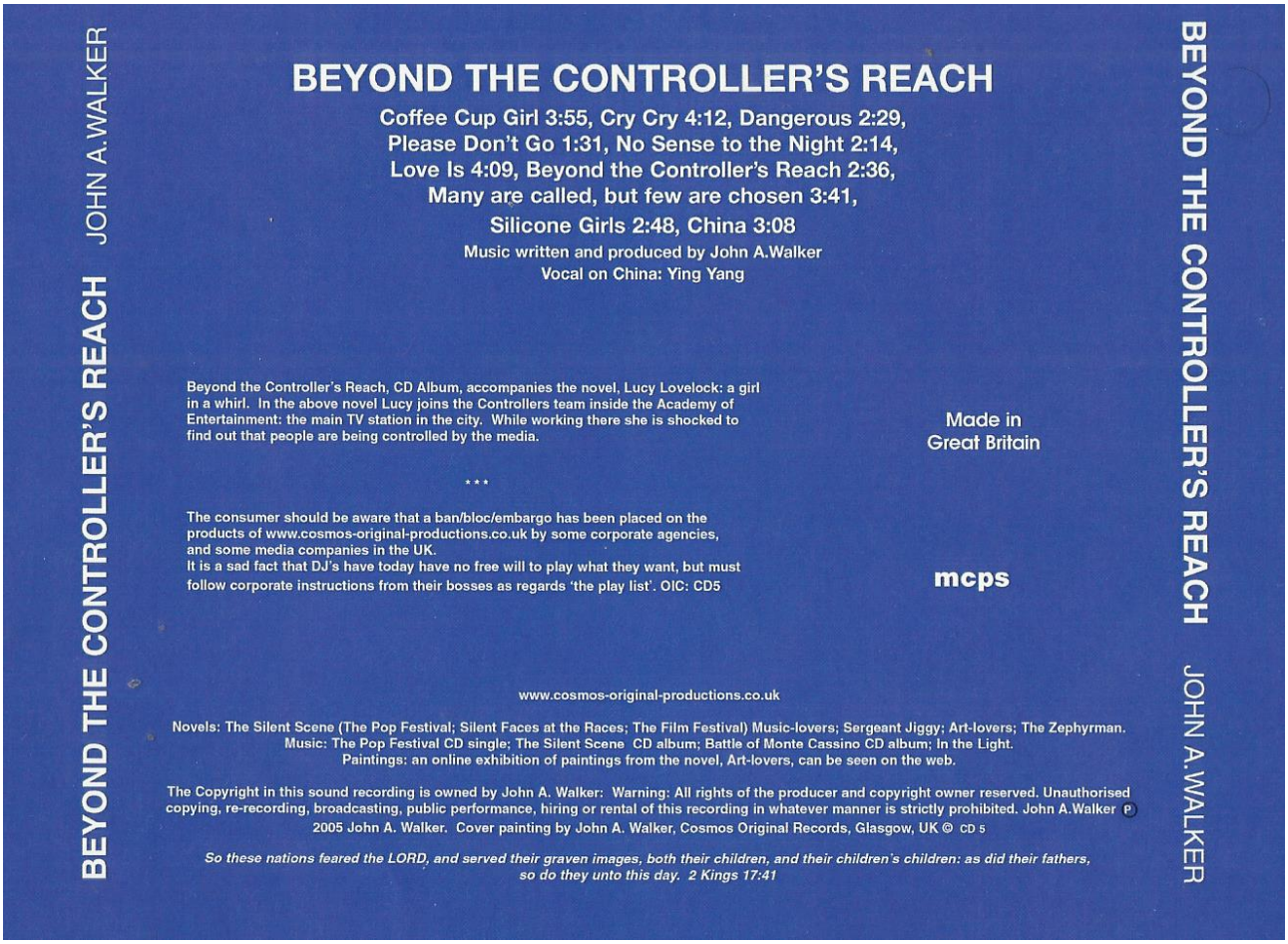
Lucy noticed the lock was broken when she tried to close the door. "He must have used a crow bar or something like that," she reported to herself, as if giving an interview to a local magazine or newspaper reporter.

"Well, I guess that's my career over as a librarian. I wonder whatever I should do next?"

Music from the novel:

https://soundcloud.com/cosmosoriginal

https://youtu.be/RtqS3561wYc


BEYOND THE CONTROLLER'S REACH
JOHN A.WALKER
BEYOND THE CONTROLLER'S REACH
Coffee Cup Girl 3:55, Cry Cry 4:12, Dangerous 2:29,
Please Don't Go 1:31, No Sense to the Night 2:14,
Love Is 4:09, Beyond the Controller's Reach 2:36,
Many are called, but few are chosen 3:41,
Silicone Girls 2:48, China 3:08
Music written and produced by John A.Walker
Vocal on China: Ying Yang
Beyond the Controller's Reach, CD Album, accompanies the novel, Lucy Lovelock: a girl in a whirl. In the above novel Lucy joins the Controllers team inside the Academy of Entertainment: the main TV station in the city. While working there she is shocked to find out that people are being controlled by the media.
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So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day. 2 Kings 17:41
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